



# CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

By  
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## PREFACE

For about a year in 1933-34, owing to the enforced absence of Sjtis Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal (who were both in jail at the time), I had the good fortune to act as a stop gap secretary to Gandhiji and to accompany him in the Harijan tour throughout India (except in the walking tour in Orissa). During this tour and before it, Gandhiji had many talks with visitors, Indian as well as non-Indian and the reports of some of these contained in the following pages are based on my long-hand notes taken at the time. These cover but a part of the large number of talks he had. Only those which took place in English, or reports of which were approved by him as part of my weekly letters in *Harijan*, have been included in the present volume. These, therefore, either reproduce his actual words or renderings which were approved of by him. A much larger number of talks took place in Gujarati or Hindustani. I propose to render them into English and to bring out another volume as a sequel to the present one.

The period covered by these talks was the Year of Grace during which Gandhiji had decided to devote himself solely to the Harijan work. Many of these conversations, therefore, deal with removal of untouchability and Harijan service. There are some repetitions in the following reports, which I have deliberately retained, if only in order to bring home to the readers, at this distance of time, the intensity and single-mindedness with which he carried on the battle against untouchability. He witnessed during this tour unforgettable scenes of

popular enthusiasm and the unmistakable support of the people to the cause of reform. And if untouchability today is a thing of the past, it is in no small measure due to the final blows given to it by Gandhiji during that historic tour.

Some of the talks also deal with political matters, and particularly with the campaign of civil disobedience which was then in full swing and was restricted to himself later, in April 1934. Some of the private discussions which took place between Gandhiji and other Congress leaders, at which I had the privilege to be present as a silent witness, have been included in the present volume because of their historical interest. These could only be published after the establishment of Swaraj. I had in mind another purpose also to be served by these reports. This year was part of a period when Gandhiji did not speak publicly about the political measures he advised the Congress to adopt from time to time, and some of his decisions could not be publicly explained to the extent he would have chosen to explain them under normal circumstances. Some of the discussions, now reported for the first time, would serve, I hope, to explain the workings of his mind and the correct interpretation of a few of his decisions. This may perhaps help the student and the historian to adjudge correctly his actions and the measure of his influence on the Congress and the country.

These reports should, I believe, also serve to show how freely his proposals were debated upon by his colleagues and how he tried to carry them with him by reasoning and persuasion. Here is no 'dictator' speaking, but a democrat of democrats that Gandhiji was and remained till the end of his days.

A word of caution as to these reports is necessary. It should be borne in mind that during discussions a person takes up various positions tentatively albeit for the sake of argument, and it would not be fair to ascribe such tentative opinions to any leader, and to criticise him for these, where these seem to go counter to his views publicly expressed. Many other interesting discussions relating to an important phase in the national struggle, which took place either in Gujarati or Hindustani, I hope to include in the volume that is to follow.

Baroda,  
20-8-49

C S

"For though I be absent in the flesh yet am I with you in  
in the spirit"

*Paul Colossians 2, 5*



"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you "

*John 15, 14*



"When a man lives with God his voice shall be as sweet as  
the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn"

*Emerson*

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## CHINA

[Date 4-9-1933 Place "Parnakuti", Poona A mill agent of Ahmedabad, who came to see Gandhiji, introduced to him an Englishman who was a selling agent of machinery and who had just returned from a visit to Japan In the course of a conversation with him a reference was made to China ]

Gandhiji—I very nearly went to China Then the people themselves said, 'Not now,' because disturbances had broken out I would not have been satisfied with a visit to Shanghai The idea was to penetrate to the innermost part of China Then I would have seen the heart of China I can picture now to myself Shanghai, but I cannot picture to myself the villages of China Had I gone to China I would have gone to Japan also

## LIFE NOT ONE STRAIGHT ROAD

[Date 4-9-1933 Place Poona The late Shri G K Devadhar, President of the Servants of India Society, who had just recovered

## CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

from a serious illness, called on Gandhiji to inquire after his health. Referring to the latest fast, he had hardly uttered a few words when he broke down.]

Gandhiji—Don't agitate yourself. I understand the depth of your feeling.

Devadhar—What great suffering you had to undergo!

G—It was bodily suffering. I had invited it. God has given me the strength to undergo suffering when necessary. When there is a call to fast, it is a torture not to fast. It is with me not a thing of today or yesterday. Life is not one straight road. There are so many complexities in it. It is not like a train which, once started, keeps on running.

D—I don't want to advise you.

### 3

## PROHIBITION AND GOVERNMENT

[Date 4-9-1933. Place Poona. A talk with Mr Edwards, a Christian missionary of Poona who was interested in the temperance movement.]

E—The movement for temperance today is one of the most serious things in Indian nationalism. The suspicion is that there is a political motive behind it apart from its moral and economic consequences. What is your standpoint? I want to represent you correctly.

G—A large part of the workers are interested in retention of the moral fibre among the people. We are not beating the Government with the prohibition stick. Constructive workers are interested in India remaining sober for the sake of it. If you want to maintain the military expenditure at its present high level, you must keep the country drunk. I said to the Government. I don't ask you to introduce prohibition in one day. But

## UNTOUCHABILITY AND SWARAJ

promise that it is your policy, and I am there with you' But they could not do it. It should be common cause between us. The temperance movement, so far as we are concerned, is entirely free from politics.

E—I am not referring to you and other genuine workers.

G—A large part of the workers are interested in temperance for the sake of temperance. If we had a national Government, we would abolish drink in the least possible time. It would be the first cut in our income.

E—I meant to refer only to those who do not think of it constructively.

G—The reform, we are told, cannot be carried out for want of an alternate source of income. The American reformers retorted to this argument by saying 'If people are more sober, the Government will have more revenue.' It is for the Government to find out other sources of revenue. In India the bulk of the people never drink. But here the Government have put obstructions in the way of the prohibition workers. We carried on a campaign against liquor among Harijans. But the Government allowed men to carry liquor bottles in their pockets, and allowed liquor dealers to keep their shops open till a very late hour.

## UNTOUCHABILITY AND SWARAJ

[Date 5-9-1933 Place Poona A talk with Shri Vithalrao Sunde of the Depressed Class Mission of Poona.]

S—What do you propose to do now?

G—From here I will go to Bombay and stay there for a while with a double object—to see Harijan workers

and to inspect the work of the Anti-Untouchability Board, and to scent the general atmosphere in Bombay. It will help me to arrive at a correct decision. Then I propose to go to Wardha. Today my path is not clear to me. But it is likely that I may keep out of jail and devote myself to Harijan work for one year which is the term of my imprisonment. That will be encouraging from your point of view.

S—It will be a great step towards peace.

G—If possible, I will make an announcement from here. I am simply craving for light. Just now I am in a fog. I have not yet got out of that fog.

S—The condition of the peasants is very bad.

G—Is it very bad in Maharashtra? In Gujarat, I know, it is bad enough.

S—Here their condition is worse than that of the Harijans.

G—There are two sides to this question. Some workers say peasants are worse off than the Harijans. Others say they are not. If you have any literature dealing with this subject, I am prepared to study it. A critical study of the subject has to be made. Study and seeing both are necessary. Before I went to Champaran I had studied all relevant papers. I could therefore see at once the course I had to follow. I could understand the condition of the peasants because I had made a thorough study of the papers, and I had no difficulty in grasping what they had to tell me.

S—The gesture of the Government in your case is a welcome sign. You are now asked to make a response to it.

G—No, the move of the Government is mischievous. There is no sympathy behind it. It throws all weight on my shoulders.

S—There can be no Swaraj without the removal of untouchability.

G—It is all right if you say there *can* be no Swaraj without the removal of untouchability. But if you say

## PRAYING WHEEL AND WORKING WHEEL

there *should* be no Swaraj without the removal of untouchability it is meaningless For me the two are convertible terms If there is no Swaraj for the so-called untouchables, it means there is no Swaraj for India as a whole There can be no Swaraj for India *apart from* the 'untouchables', therefore there can be no Swaraj without the removal of untouchability

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## PRAYING WHEEL AND WORKING WHEEL

{Date 12-9-1933 Place Poona A talk with a Japanese monk eager to serve India Gandhiji had started work at 5-30 in the morning, and had a little rest only at 2 p.m. He was spinning during this talk }

The Monk—I am eager to go to jail

G—You can help in many other ways Every country must work out its own salvation Those who owe a debt to India can discharge it in many other ways but not by going to jail

The Monk—Then teach me

G—I am no teacher I am a worker I can teach you work Here is the spinning wheel It is a praying wheel and also a working wheel Here work and prayer go on side by side See what it turns out Now I have taught you work When you are an adept in it, I will show you other work I am a teacher of work, there is no doubt about that You must get at least 75 per cent marks Then I will prescribe other work for you It means you must know ginning and carding also You can say you have joined the movement of spinning Let this be sufficient for the time being

## PROPAGANDISTS FOR HARIJAN WORK

[Date 13-9-1933 Place Poona Shri Haribhau Phatak, a Harijan worker of Poona, made some suggestions in regard to Harijan work.]

G—I shall see to it if I remain out of prison for a year, i.e. if the Government allow me to remain out. I wish to remain out, but the Government perhaps may not wish to leave me free. They may say 'Your activity may be aggressive or not aggressive, but you cannot be allowed to remain out. We have let you out in order to tide over our difficulties. When our difficulties are over and we have prepared public opinion for crushing you to atoms, we will send you back to jail.' Then also I am a willing victim.

Haribhau—Have you considered my scheme of having paid propagandists for the removal of untouchability?

G—Paid propagandists are worthless. Propagandists should be like Malaviyaji, Laxman Shastri, Narayan Shastri, and Shridhar Shastri Pathak. They should be men with unimpeachable character. How can we pick up propagandists like these? Paid men would commit speeches to memory and recite them before the public. Should we take up false coins because we do not get sovereigns? It is absolutely a chimerical idea. I strongly disapprove of it. I have worked in this way throughout my public life. How can I say now all of a sudden that I shall create propagandists?

## HOW THE STRUGGLE STARTED

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## HOW THE STRUGGLE STARTED

[Date 19-9-1933 Place Bombay A talk with an Englishman in Bombay In the course of the talk reference was made to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Lord Willingdon]

G—No one can question Jawaharlal's unrivalled qualifications for leadership Lord Willingdon wanted me to see him before I would do anything, when I came to India in 1915 He wanted to know my programme

M—You are old friends Lord Willingdon is not a new problem for you

G—From jail also I carried on correspondence with him The present struggle has been forced on us I said in December 1931 'I go to India to seek peace' This was before I knew of Jawaharlal's arrest I wanted to go to Bengal, though I was returning a disappointed man from the Round Table Conference In that assembly members were nominated by the Government, not elected by the people The interview that was published while I was on my way back to India was entirely a caricature of what I said in Italy Sir Samuel Hoare asked me to contradict it I said it was entirely false I was bent on peace On landing in Bombay I saw the horizon black I sent a telegram to Lord Willingdon so that there might be no misunderstanding I fought my colleagues in the Working Committee They were opposed to sending the telegram I said to them 'Let me do it in my own fashion' The first telegram was suppressed Lord Willingdon said in effect 'Repudiate your colleagues in advance, and you can only discuss with me the constitutional issue'

E—That correspondence opened my eyes

G—It was all Emerson's Lord Irwin left nothing to his Private Secretary, though he had a most able Private Secretary He made his own decisions So also did Lord Hardinge



E—The despatch of the Rome correspondent of the *Glasgow Herald* was most abusive and vicious

G—He was walking with me All the time I rejected his advances I told him I would say nothing

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CIVIL RESISTANCE AND HARIJAN WORK

I

[Date 10-10-1933 Place Wardha A talk with two prominent Congressmen from Andhra—Shri A Kaleswara Rao and Shri M Bapineedu]

K—Did you receive our letter, Mahatmaj?

G—Yes I have received many such letters, several of them angry ones There is no anger in yours You wrote it out of love I have just received an indictment from General Avasthi

K—We did not join the Swaraj Party till you arrived at a compromise with Deshbandhu Das Till then we were in favour of the Delhi compromise of 1923 We wanted in no way to differ from you

G—Oh, say, you never wavered in your loyalty

K—There are no two parties in Andhra Somehow we have made it up Now the greatest trouble and quarrel have arisen over the fact that the political fight has been subordinated to another fight which had to come later on The Harijan cause is a sacred one from social, religious and political points of view There can be no Swaraj without it But why should it be allowed to interfere with the present struggle of the Congress?

G—Don't begin with that Removal of untouchability is an integral part of the Congress programme An India-wide campaign of civil disobedience at top speed

cannot last for many years, it can last for months only. In the Congress struggle, as in war, there have always been ebb and flow. In 1931 when there was an ebb in our affairs, came the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. It would not have come if the struggle was going on at top speed. But the struggle had reduced itself to a sort of guerilla warfare. There was no mass action. It was my intense desire to stop it. In 1931 I wanted to settle the Hindu-Muslim dispute here, before I went to London for the second Round Table Conference. But Lord Willingdon then wanted me to go, so he arranged for a special train from Kalka. In London there was an unholy pact between the so-called minorities. I then put my life at stake for the Harijans. As a far-seeing man I saw that if we accepted the scheme for separate electorates for Harijans embodied in the British Government's decision, our connection with the Harijans would be broken. Hindu society would be rent into two. Harijans would become a separate entity. They might combine with others, but never remain part of Hinduism. If this happened, Hinduism would be destroyed—not because of the secession of six crores of Harijans, but because of the reason that would lead them to part with us. If out of their own free will they choose to go out, they are at liberty to do so, but we, Caste Hindus, should not give them any cause for leaving Hinduism. I therefore thought of putting my whole soul into it. While my negotiations with Dr Ambedkar were going on in London the Minorities' Pact was hurled on me. Mr Macdonald said it was a pact between 46 per cent of Indians. I rebuked Mr Macdonald and said 'You have no business to say this.' Lord Sankey and Mr Macdonald were the two main figures there on the Government side. As soon as I saw Lord Sankey I said to myself 'I won't swear by him, he has no conscience.' Mr Macdonald had no opinions. He would not miss any opportunity to support the basest demands of the 'Minorities' and to fling mud at the so-called Majority. The majority today is a minority.

of corruption came to my notice. This led to the 21 days' fast. On August 1st I again courted imprisonment, and was taken to Yeravda jail. I again asked for the facilities to carry on Harijan work from prison as before. They refused, and I entered on another fast, which ultimately led to my unconditional release on August 24th.

I have spoken of corruption. Some workers misbehaved even towards Harijan girls. I have described the horrible struggle I have had to go through before deciding to undertake the fast. During the 21 days other things came to my notice. Several Harijan workers told me they had hitherto considered themselves spotless but had now been awakened to a sense of their shortcomings. An overseer, who had for many years cheated labourers, sent me a confession which I have published in *Harijan*. We do expect those who have dedicated themselves to this cause to be clean. Other religions too have prescribed fasting for purification. Now challenge my position, if you wish to.

K—Our movement did wane, Mahatmajī, particularly in December 1932 and in the beginning of 1933. The other time, in 1931, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact came to our rescue.

G—The nation has got the lesson it needed. Freedom never comes prematurely. If it had come, it would have been like a premature birth. We shall have to go to jail again and again. We should not get irritated if others do not follow. This sacred thread (Harijan work) has been taken up while the struggle was going on. Somehow it has to be pulled through.

K—You tried to get the Temple Entry Bill passed in the Central Legislature, and sent Rajaji to Delhi to canvass support for the Bill. This action has been criticised by many as being contrary to the Congress principles.

G—The principles of the Congress are for the furtherance of its cause. In 1921, in the heyday of non-cooperation, a Congressman in Utkal misappropriated

Congress funds, in the belief that the Congress, having resolved upon a boycott of law courts, would take no legal action against him. When the case was reported to me, I sent a telegram asking office-bearers of the Congress to get him arrested. The principles of the Congress should not be such as would frustrate the objects of the Congress. In regard to temple entry there is a legal obstacle which has recently come to our notice. It is part of our duty to get it removed. If some short-sighted persons see a contradiction here, we must live down the criticism 'Is there a question of degree here?' some will ask. There is, I would say. It does make a difference whether you take one grain of arsenic in one dose or thirty grains. Medicine can legitimately be used for a cure, though not for suicide.

K—Malaviyaji's differences with you in regard to the Temple Entry Bill were disappointing to us.

G—To me also, especially when Malaviyaji was party to that resolution. Therein it is said that 'this right shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest Acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before that time'. After long service of the country men like Malaviyaji have a right to make mistakes, though after the passing of any Congress resolution he has always said 'I shall abide by it'. But we have to go the whole hog. Our canvassing, however, was of a totally different character. You cannot patronize the members of the Legislatures. But we expect them some day to come to our side. They are our own countrymen. After all the efforts at persuading them were made, they were told that they might pass the Bill if they chose to, otherwise they might not, but, it was added, it would not behove them to reject the Bill. In this case we have not *given* co-operation but *taken* it. Supposing the Government gave us prohibition of liquor at this moment are we going to refuse it? I don't laugh at council-goers. I laugh at those who suggest council-going in the place

of civil disobedience For those who do not believe in civil disobedience there is no go but working through the councils Resistance in the councils is futile, but it is a sort of resistance nevertheless Council-going is wicked from my standpoint, not from theirs

## 10

## CIVIL RESISTANCE AND HARIJAN WORK

## III

[Date 13-10-1933 Place Wardha A further continuation of the talk with Shri A Kaleswara Rao and Shri M Bapineedu]

K—Can you guess why Lord Willingdon persists in refusing to see you?

G—Lord Willingdon said years ago to a Bombay audience 'You Indians do not have the courage to say No' You take a cue from the officials and then say yes or no' He therefore probably gives us a lesson, and keeps on saying 'no' to all my requests for an interview with him People tell me that he hates me

K—Why did you advise a six weeks' suspension of civil disobedience when you began the 21 days' fast in May 1933?

G—Because I felt that the people would have no zest to offer civil disobedience while my life was hanging in the balance The idea flashed upon me the moment I got through the prison gates You can call that a gesture, if you like

K—You said you had full facilities for carrying on Harijan work from the prison Was there any undertaking from the Government to that effect?

G—Yes I have published the letter Only five days after the fast in September 1932, the prison doors

## CIVIL RESISTANCE AND HARIJAN WORK

closed. Then I wrote letters to the Government and when there was no reply to these, I sent a telegram. I said to them "The alteration of the British Government's decision was only a part performance of my task. I must fulfil my promise to the Harijans. Caste Hindus cannot fulfil their part of the obligations under the Pact, if you put me out of touch with them." I said that if my demand was not granted, I would commence with C class diet and would end with a complete fast. Then came a telegram from the Government of India saying "Won't you wait for two days more?" Another telegram followed after two days giving me full facilities for carrying on Harijan work from the prison. They acted almost generously. The arrangement went on very well till I began my 21 days' fast when they discharged me. I said 'Keep

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The following orders were conveyed to Gandhiji on the morning of 3rd November 1932

"Government of India recognise, in view of considerations stated in Mr Gandhi's letters of October 18th and October 24th that if he is to carry out the programme that he has set before himself in regard to removal of untouchability, which they had not before fully appreciated, it is necessary that he should have freedom in regard to visitors and correspondence on matters strictly limited to removal of untouchability

They also recognise that, if Mr Gandhi's activities in this matter are to be fully effective, there can be no restriction on publicity

'As they do not wish to interpose obstacles to Mr Gandhi's efforts in connection with problem of untouchability, they are removing all restrictions on visitors, correspondence and publicity in regard to matters which in Mr Gandhi's own words have no reference to civil disobedience and are strictly limited to removal of untouchability'

"They note that Mr Gandhi contemplates presence of officials at interviews and inspection then and there of correspondence, should Government at any time consider such procedure as desirable'

## CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

G—I shall see that during my tour Opposition is felt in unexpected quarters and in unexpected ways I was not prepared for the mentality Harijans conceal their caste and go into temples Nobody minds it (Gandhiji described some recent instances of opposition to the movement) I have given you the blackest side of the picture The Servants of Untouchables Society is overtaking this, and we are spending all money on Harijans not on intermediaries

H—Is there anything we Christians can do?

G—I have got letters from Christian Harijans about the disabilities they suffer from in the Christian fold If I tried to do anything about it, I would be involving myself in controversy I would help where I could I have said to them 'If you don't bluster, you will get your rights This wretched custom from which you suffer is due to our fault' These letters have come from Travancore, Madras side and Vizag A professor says 'This is our lot How are you going to ameliorate our condition?'

Gandhiji was spinning while the talk was going on. He therefore spoke to the visitors about the charkha

G—This is the music of the charkha The other music, that of the gramophone, for example, gives no wealth The charkha gives wealth and gives music in the bargain The charkha is also a medicine chest It will give you peace A friend from Scotland sent me his testimony as to how the charkha calms the mind. Children who are fidgety become calm when put to this.

[Date 2-11-1933 Place Wardha A talk with Dr Conger]

Q—Is the hand of God behind good only or is it behind evil also?

A—It is behind good, but in God's hand it is not mere good. His hand is behind evil also, but there it is no longer evil. 'Good' and 'evil' is our own imperfect language. God is above both good and evil.

Q—There is God's will behind every one of our actions, is it not?

A—Even allowing that there is His will behind every action, man can say that certain things God allows, wills or prohibits. All this is taken to mean His 'will'.

Q—You said there was God's inspiration behind your 21 days' fast. You have also spoken of 'wrestling' and 'wresting' in connection with Him. What do you mean exactly to convey?

A—These are the babblings of an imperfect man. Man's wrestling with God is like that of an infant's wrestling with the mother. The infant does wrestle with the mother, and when the mother gives it a feed the infant says 'I wrested it from her' (Here Gandhiji gave the dictionary meanings of the words 'wrestle' and 'wrest'). Similarly God, when He parts with something, does so with pleasure—if God has pleasure and pain. A man who surrenders everything at His feet says to Him 'I will die, if you don't give me a certain thing'. He defies and challenges God. In millions of examples God lets such men reach the point of death. Then we say He has thoroughly tested the man. That, however, is our own feeling. If man can somehow know God's way of putting things, I don't know what he would say. We foolish beings think that we exhausted our strength in wrestling with Him. With God there is neither wrestling nor wresting. If God is just, He would not torture His devotee.

Q—Is God just or not?

A—God is just. Rather say He is not just but merciful. He is just because He is merciful. These, however, are echoes of our own weak feeling. Man also sometimes talks of giving God His due. But what can a slave give to the Master? In relation to God man is always a



## CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

A—That is my view. Many may not support it. We have quarreled politically. I believe Hinduism to be a religion of Truth. But Islam and Christianity also are religions of Truth. From your standpoint Christianity is true, Hinduism from my standpoint.

Q—What about idolatry?

A—Idolatry is implanted in the human heart. There is idol-worship in the Quran. What is a mosque? It is a species of idol-worship. The word 'idol' does not apply only to a human figure. Anything that the eye can see is an idol. The belief that Allah resides in the mosque, and the custom to turn the face to Mecca during prayers, are a species of idolatry. But the Muslims would retort, 'Maybe it is idolatry, but your idolatry is of an altogether different variety.' The rock-bottom truth is that we are all idolaters.

Q—What, in your view, is the ideal relationship between Christianity and Hinduism?

A—The same as that between Islam and Hinduism. The essence of all religions is one, only their approaches are different.

Q—In the West it is said that 'Gandhi is a towering example of Jesus's teaching put into practice.'

A—As a seeker of truth I believe that I owe more to Jesus than to Mahomed. I often cite, without premeditation, parallels from Islam and Christianity. I would say, however, that I can derive non-violence from the New Testament, but find it difficult to derive it from the Quran. The Sermon on the Mount has made a deep impression on me. The Bible seemed to me dry as dust till I came to the Sermon on the Mount. According to my limited intelligence and my limited conception of truth at the time, I satisfied myself that I had read the Bible. Today I read the Old Testament with a different ideal altogether and with profit. I now see a hidden meaning in many things in the Old Testament.

Q—Wherein lies the beauty of Islam in your view?

A—The spirit of brotherhood is manifested in no

other religion as in Islam. It is no doubt confined to Muslims. But Islam has been a downright leveller as no other religion has been. It would be much better if the followers of Islam say the whole world is a brotherhood.

## CIVIL RESISTANCE

[Date 3-11-1933 Place Wardha. A talk with Shri B. Sambamurti, a Congress leader of Andhra.]

S—Why should we carry on a campaign of individual civil resistance? Why not have mass civil resistance?

G—There is nothing to prohibit any province from taking up mass civil resistance. It may do so on its own responsibility. Even a taluka or a village can do so. My own reading is that no taluka or village is ready for it. Mass civil disobedience was suspended not when it was at its height, but at a time when there was practically no mass civil disobedience going on. (Here Gandhiji gave an account of how the resolution for mass civil disobedience was passed at the informal conference of Congress workers held at Poona in July 1933.) Mass civil disobedience, I said, was a spent force and must be suspended. Mass civil disobedience cannot be carried on in face of ordinances. Civil disobedience, I argued, would now prove invincible as an individual effort. To defeat the end in view, and in anger, they voted for mass civil disobedience. The informal conference was only for my guidance. Individual civil disobedience can continue till the end of time. No one, however, is prevented from going forward. If anybody takes up mass civil disobedience and brings Swaraj, no one can prevent it. As an optimistic man I may say that Swaraj is not coming for ten years yet.

S—Is individual civil disobedience, then, to go on for ten years?

G—Why, for a hundred years—if Sambamurti and Gandhi continue to offer it

S—Why should we not call the A I C C ?

G—Why should there not be a requisition?

S—A sufficient number of members would not give their signatures, because your opinion is known to be against it. Will it not be an inconvenience to you?

G—There will be no inconvenience to me if the A I C C is called. It is my belief, however, that it will not be in the interest of the country to call the A I C C. Its decision is a foregone conclusion. Today as an organisation it is legal. When you pass a resolution in favour of civil disobedience, it will be declared illegal. Why invite that step when it is not necessary to do so? It would be futile. Possibly some members hold the view that the A I C C won't confirm civil disobedience but would resolve on a change in the Congress programme. These members must send a requisition. If you give me a secret requisition, I will on my own responsibility ask Jawaharlal to convene a meeting of the A I C C. I don't want to gag public opinion.

S—If the A I C C decides to call off civil disobedience, will you abide by the decision?

G—I shall abide by it in the sense that I won't carry on civil disobedience in the name of the Congress. You won't stop individual action. Is it wrong if I carry on civil disobedience outside the Congress?

S—You won't be allowed to go outside the Congress.

G—I would be a Congress member. But I can carry on civil disobedience just as I can carry on my own experiences on dietetics. If the A I C C says civil disobedience won't be carried on, I won't carry it on in the name of the Congress. My individual civil disobedience would be carried on outside the Congress. If an individual Congressman goes to the Council not in the name of the Congress, would it be a breach of discipline?

S—No

G—Similarly I would carry on civil disobedience not in the name of the Congress but on my own responsibility. When I thought of starting civil disobedience in Chirala Perala and Bardoli, there was no resolution of the Congress. All throughout it was not in the name of the Congress, though Congressmen carried it on. If such civil disobedience succeeds, the credit belongs to the Centre. If, on the other hand, it fails, there is no discredit to the Centre.

S—What about the no tax campaign?

G—I am carrying it on in my own person. The Gujarat Vidyapith at Ahmedabad has not paid the rent this year. The Congress does not say you must pay taxes. The Congress calls off mass civil disobedience. Therefore one cannot conduct mass civil disobedience in the name of the Centre.

S—If I offer myself for arrest and the Government don't arrest me, what am I to do?

G—If you offer yourself for arrest and the Government don't arrest you, you have done your duty. You are not to break houses and get arrested. Picketing may continue, but not merely as a symbol. I don't want vain or symbolical picketing. For picketing no one need go out of his village. No money is required for that. Let them do picketing in their own village. Are the villagers not feeding themselves? They will also feed the worker. The most effective picketing is to be done in villages and not in cities. Where does all the foreign cloth go if not to villages? Then picketing should be carried on without any money being required. The movement is bound to fail if money is required and if it does not come forth except secretly. Secrecy means fear. What is the use of getting that money? You may better go on the streets. Then you would be most effective. Some passer-by would take pity on you, I have no doubt. I have put before you the theory of this subject.

## NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

[Date 4-11-1933 Place Wardha A talk with Herr Buto, a young German, who later accompanied Gandhiji during a part of the Harijan tour]

B—How should non-violence work if, suppose, the Germans came to India?

G—Supposing India has in the meanwhile settled with Britain and there is peace between Britain and India, there would be a non-violent combination between Britain and India against the Germans Why would you come to India?

B—For conquering India

G—Britain conquered India and took taxes from the people India is now fighting non-violently against British rule If Russia or any other foreign power came to India, they won't get the people to co-operate with them

In reply to another remark by the questioner, Gandhiji said It is not non-violence at all, it is passive submission Submission is cowardice, and cowardice is not non-violence

B—But we Germans did practise non-violence

G—You fought and, when defeated, offered passive resistance That is not non-violence

B—We offered non-violent resistance to France in the Rhineland, but at last we had to give in

G—You are wholly wrong You were not non-violent A non-violent man should not give in at all You said you had to give in It means your passive resistance was exhausted If not, they would have killed every German in the area It would have been humiliating to France Take the instance of the 600 Greeks who died holding the pass of Thermopylae Their resistance was violent, but they died to a man, and they have become heroes of the world

## GOD AND TRUTH

B—If we don't become violent, we should be done with

G—It is what the world has done up till now. Now a man like me comes on the scene, and shows a different way of governing human relations. Violent men have not been known in history to die to a man. They die up to a point. The Germans died up to a point and then gave in. There was no disgrace in doing so. An event such as I speak of has not happened in history. It is my implicit belief that, if such a race is born, no nation can lay its unholy hands on it.

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## GOD AND TRUTH

[Date 6-11-1933 Place Wardha A third talk with Dr Conger ]

C—I came back because I could not help it, I could not do anything else. Now please tell me something more about God and Truth.

G—Truth is God—nothing else, nothing less.

C—How would you define Truth?

G—Means, how would you describe God? The nearest word answering to Truth in Sanskrit is *sat*. *Sat* means being. God alone is *sat*. He alone is, nothing and no one else is. Everything else is illusion. *Satya* means *sat*. Truth alone is in the world, nothing else is. This is easy enough to understand. Then what is truth? For us it is a relative term. Absolute Truth is God. Whatever we understand by God is implied in Truth. For us, however, relative truth is a safe ground. We must stick to what for the time being appears truth to us.

C—Would you call it reality?

G—I won't use the word 'reality' either For a thief, stealing is his reality, for he says he does not consider it wrong It may be reality, but it is not truth I have to follow truth as it appears to me, because I cannot live without it The truth as it appears to you may be truth for you, but not for others

C—Is truth different for different men?

G—Logically it is not Truth permeates the world Therefore men will think by and by alike In non-essentials we differ, in essentials we agree If today there are different tendencies and we think differently, a time will come when all will think alike

C put in a question about faith and observation

G—One must have either faith or observation He may begin with faith, and end in realisation He begins with faith when he does not know how to carry on the experiment For this, however, there must be the previous experience of men who have preceded him Faith cannot be exercised without it

C—Is there any other characteristic of Truth?

G—It alone really sustains us For a time many other things may sustain us, but this alone sustains us for all time

C—Anything more?

G—Truth gives perennial joy In Sanskrit we have the words *sat*, *chit*, *ānanda* It is a fine combination The three together make one word Truth is knowledge also It is life You feel vitality in you when you have got truth in you Again it gives bliss It is a permanent thing of which you cannot be robbed You may be sent to the gallows, or put to torture, but if you have truth in you, you will experience an inner joy

C—Do you believe in a personal God?

G—I don't I don't believe God to be a personal being in the sense that we are personal beings I understand God to be universal Law God, however, cannot be described in His fullness We human beings describe Him in our own vocabulary God is the Law as well as

## GOD AND TRUTH

the Law-giver The two are one In Buddhism God is described as the Law Many people say that Buddhism is atheistic I have never thought so

C—Science also believes in the Law, is it not?

G—Science very often goes wrong It does not believe in the Law being a vital thing, but a blind force I don't believe in the Law being a blind force When a man speaks of the 'inner voice', the scientist says it is auto-suggestion It is auto-suggestion indeed, because God is within When he says it is auto-suggestion, to him it appears a thing to be despised and suppressed I, however, use the word 'auto-suggestion' in my own sense When we descend to the empirical level, we descend to the world of duality In God there is no duality But as soon as we descend to the empirical level we get two forces—God and Satan, as Christianity calls them Other terms for the two are used in Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Islam When the scientist speaks of the inner voice being auto-suggestion, he means to say it is the devil's voice Maybe it is There are occasions when the devil's voice speaks as God's voice God's voice is not heard in the heart of every person It is no matter of inherent right You must undergo a course of training, if you want to hear the voice of God There are some rules laid down for it If you followed them, the result would be infallible

C—How would you define evil?

G—Evil is good or truth misplaced It has no separate existence at all, but it is only truth or good misplaced  
Miss Mary Barr—Is evil also made by God?

G—Nothing can possibly exist without His allowing it He makes many things inverted which must be put right We must invert the process God has given us conscience He has given us the power to do right If I take your thing with your permission, it is right If I take it without your permission, it is stealing, and I must put it back in its own place



SWARAJ AND UNTOUCHABILITY

[Date 9-11-1933 Place Nagpur A talk with pressmen]

Q—Have you any statement to make?

A—I have issued a big statement last night in which I have exhausted all points. You may ask me questions. You will find me at present uncommunicative. My energy is used up in going to meetings and solving puzzles.

Q—How many years do you think it will take for the complete removal of untouchability at the present rate of progress?

A—It is more than I can answer. It is a question of a change of the hearts of millions of human beings.

Q—Will you be prepared to receive Swaraj before this curse is removed?

A—The question is badly put. There is no meaning in asking whether I shall be prepared to receive Swaraj if untouchability is not removed by then. Swaraj is not a matter of receiving or taking. It is one of evolution. We either grow to it from day to day, or we go away from it. If we, as a nation, are becoming more and more conscious of ourselves, of the fundamental unity of millions, then we are certainly progressing towards it. Whereas, if we are dissolving, then we are receding from it.

Q—Do you not realize that the depressed classes have even now got their own superstitions, and that they very much hesitate to associate with, for instance, Brahmins, even if they are asked to do so?

A—No. I do not because, if what you say is true it means that they want to remain in their present state of degradation. I cannot understand a social leper glorying in his leprosy. If the so-called depressed classes are so disgusted with the so-called high class Hindus that they want absolutely to cut themselves adrift from

Hinduism and Hindus, then they form a separate entity which means they establish a new religion, or they accept any of the other prevailing religions of India. That is a thing which can happen if the so-called higher classes continue to wallow in their imaginary superiority and do not perform the elementary duty of regarding the Harijans as their kith and kin. This anti-untouchability movement is an attempt to do this elementary duty by the Harijans.

Q—Harijans seem to be unwilling to mix with Caste Hindus. Is it not a fact?

A—My experience is wholly different. I have talked with thousands of Harijans. They are eager to associate with the higher classes, if the latter behave themselves. What is true is that they distrust the higher classes, and where they do not distrust them, they are afraid of them. And there is this unfortunate additional fact that the notion of inferiority from birth has been so much injected into them that they consider themselves doomed by God to eternal inferiority. This must be a matter of shame and humiliation for every thinking Savarna Hindu.

Q—What is the best solution for this question?

A—The best solution is for the so-called higher castes to forget that they are higher than anybody.

Q—From the experience of these two days can you say whether you would be able to bear the strain of the tour?

A—Two days is too little time compared to the nine months in front of me. Therefore I cannot say whether I shall be able to bear its strain. I can only say that, if God wills that I should finish this tour, then, in spite of all this strain, He will give me the strength to finish it.

(Two days later at Wardha the following question was put to him.)

Q—What is your impression of the last four days' tour?

A—I do not know what better proof any critic can

demand than these meetings and demonstrations that untouchability is rapidly disintegrating. This does not mean that the mass mind has changed altogether. But if the evidence of the last four days is sustained throughout the tour, I should feel certain about the cremation of the untouchability monster within a measurable distance of time.

### THE FIRE OF CIVIL RESISTANCE

[Date 15-11-1933 Place Yeotmal (Berar) A talk with Congress workers]

Q—Has there been a set-back in the civil disobedience movement?

A—I can conceivably admit no set-back. Some men, it is true, gave up civil disobedience out of disgust or for want of faith. But if they have gone out, it has been a decided gain to the movement. Civil disobedience is good from the national point of view, from the Swaraj point of view. You must study the workings of civil disobedience as I know it and put into effect. Civil disobedience can only succeed by the effort of civil resisters who can stand in face of the fiercest repression, torture and vilification. If there is one civil resister standing as a living witness of civil disobedience, then there will be light or, to use the language of Zoroastrianism, the eternal fire in a fire temple. Then you can get a blaze. But if there is no fire, if every spark has died out, then there is nothing to set ablaze the fire of civil disobedience. In wars of arms, in violent warfare, either of the parties has to admit defeat. For instance, take Germany. There is no nation of brave warriors like the Germans. But they had to surrender. In civil resistance there is no sur-

render Its effect is startling, much greater than the effect of violent warfare I therefore referred to the fire temple, and said that if there is no spark there would be no fire But here we have the fire blazing The science of satyagraha has not been woven out of my brain It has come to me in dribblets, and by scientific research It is the result of the hardest labour a human being is capable of I have applied to this research all the skill of a scientist I have worked at it unceasingly and unremittingly, and this is the result

Q—If one does not offer civil resistance, what political work is he to do?

A—Today a vacuum has been created because paralysis has overtaken the Indian mind It is said against me that I have produced a hypnotic effect on people Others won't move unless I move Satyamurti and Asaf Ali tell me 'You move' Now that is violence I say to them 'You may convert the Congress to your view' I converted the Congress to non-cooperation in 1920 I was hard put to it Not in a single instance evil means were used It was the first time votes were openly taken in the Congress People voted for non-cooperation simply out of conviction There was an array of hostile speakers Motilaji came over to our side at the last moment Then a few months later Das came, and then Lalaji There is consistently brilliant history behind non-cooperation I said to Satyamurti 'You must do as I did in 1920' My heart is sorely struck by misrepresentation and discourteous criticism I stand for courtesy, gentleness, good manners I want the nation in India to be robust and ultimately bring us what we want Council entry is the sanest programme for those who have no faith in civil resistance But if I have faith and no strength, I would go to a physician who would give me strength

Q—For those who have faith in civil resistance but no strength, what work would you suggest?

A—They cannot take up any other political work,

unless their conscience is satisfied with municipalities. There is real work there also. If you can successfully run municipalities or local boards, it would be great and solid work. But you should know how difficult it is. Do you know what happened to Rajendrababu and Jawaharlal when they took up municipal work? Das died prematurely because of the municipality. It was well-nigh impossible to hold the party together. The fourth was Vallabhbhai. He held on, but you don't know what it cost him to do so. There is so much of exploitation going on there. All these men whom I have named are incorruptible. Municipalities as instruments of democratic Swaraj are no good. That the municipalities were excluded from the non-cooperation programme was a matter of compromise. Those who have no faith in civil resistance have nothing else than councils. If I lost faith in civil disobedience, I would go to councils even if I were alone. But civil resistance and council work cannot go on together. Motilalji saw that, and when he came to civil disobedience he gave up the councils.

## 19

## A NEGATION OF SATYAGRAHA

[Date 18-11-1933 Place Akola. A Sanatanist sannyasi, Lal-nath by name, and his young associates from the North came to Deoli, a village near Wardha, on 11th November, the 5th day of the Harijan tour, and threatened to oppose temple entry by Harijans by lying prostrate in front of the temple. They continued to disturb the meeting by shouting their slogans. They again made their appearance a few days later at Dhamangaon and then at Amraoti, making abortive attempts at both places to hold up Gandhiji's car on the way by lying prostrate before it. At

Akola, however, they had, an hour before the time of the public meeting, placed themselves at the gate of the house where Gandhiji had put up, with a view to obstructing Gandhiji's way. On coming to know of this, Gandhiji called the sannyasi, the leader of the band, to a quiet talk before proceeding to the meeting. The sannyasi came in and carried on the conversation in a courteous manner. He said that he wanted Gandhiji to give up his tour or give up talking about the Bills and that, therefore, he was offering satyagraha and paying Gandhiji in his own coin.]

G—This is not satyagraha but the negation of it. You want me either to get you arrested by the police or to take the car over your bodies. I would do neither. I would go on foot. Then perhaps you would hold my feet and make me your prisoner.

S—Yes, we would hold your feet and implore you to stop this tour.

G—That would surely be violence.

S—I cannot hide our intention from you. We want to be hurt by the police or by your volunteers. When this happens, I know that you would give up the tour.

G—But I have told you that I shall certainly not summon the police and I shall not let the volunteers hurt you.

S—We must then continue to obstruct your passage.

G—You are very unreasonable. A satyagrahi must not be unreasonable. You want to provoke the police to violence. A satyagrahi never tempts anyone to do wrong. And how can you resort to such unbecoming behaviour, especially in religious matters? No earthly power can force me to act contrary to my convictions.

S—Then you should show us the better way.

G—I can certainly do that. You should go back to Banaras and ask the Lord of the Universe to wean me from my error. You should fast as I did.

S—That we have not the ability to do.

G—Then I am very sorry. I do not like this unseemly business. You should go to your advisers and tell them to persuade me by argument or prayer. If they

cannot do so, they should tolerate what I am doing, even as I tolerate their opposition. You can see that I am simply putting the case against the evil before thousands who come to listen to me.

## 20

### COMPLETE SURRENDER TO GOD

[Date 27-11-1933 Place Raipur (C P) A talk with Harijan workers. In reply to a question Gandhiji poured out his heart before them.]

G — The prestige of the Harijan Seva Sangh will grow in exact proportion to the number of selfless men and women working in it. Whatever prestige the Congress enjoys today in the country is based on the sacrifice and selfless service of hundreds of men and women claiming to belong to it. The unbroken record of service that the Congress has produced is marvellous and unique. I do not speak of the sacrifice made only during the last fifteen years during which thousands have embraced poverty as a token of their identification with the poor whom they claimed to serve. But even before that time there had been a sufficient number of men and women who had sacrificed what they considered their all and built the edifice of the Congress. But the Congress is a purely political organization. And if a body devoted to a political end has required great sacrifice from its workers, how much more should the Harijan Seva Sangh, which is a body formed for a purely religious end, do so? I have, therefore, set a much higher standard for the latter than I have done for the Congress. I have had bitter complaints as to your inaction and mixed motives. I earnestly appeal to every Harijan worker not to use this organization to serve selfish ends. We must not be over-

whelmed by difficulties, however great they may be, but trust God to solve them. We must be humble enough to know that it is He who gets His work done through men and women, who are mere instruments in the hands of that great Actor. We must completely surrender ourselves to Him. Sudama had to give up even that handful of rice he had kept back for himself before he could please God. If we surrender our all at His feet in that spirit of utter self-effacement, He will surely lead us to our goal.

A Mussalman friend, present at the meeting, asked—Why have you, a national leader, chosen for the time being to work only among a section of the nation?

G—I am trying to serve all communities today through this work. They are all branches of one big family. I have found in the Hindu branch a disease which, if not removed in time, will spread through the whole family and destroy it. The evil of untouchability has travelled far beyond its prescribed limits. In trying to root out untouchability among Hindus, I am trying to serve all the communities. Though the method of achieving communal unity through conferences has failed, I have not despaired of a heart-unity being achieved in the end. God has sent me this work, and I am doing it in the faith that the way to a real communal unity will be paved through it. It is thus, to my mind, a service of the whole nation. The effort I made in 1920-21 to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity will go down to history, and will serve as the foundation of the edifice of communal unity whenever it is achieved. I have never repented for having made that effort. For me it was not a matter of expedience. I am not aware of having done a single thing in my life as a matter of expedience. I have ever held that the highest morality is also the highest expedience. Some European friends assure me that I am waging this war against untouchability on behalf of the whole of humanity. Once this canker is removed from Hinduism, Hindus, Mussalmans and others will sink their



differences and will embrace one another as blood-brothers, and all communities will feel that they are all branches of the same tree

21

WITH HARIJANS

[Date 10-12-1933 Place New Delhi A talk with a group of Harijans]

Q—Do you consider temple entry as the only way to solve our troubles?

A—It is my firm belief that Caste Hindus will not have fulfilled their obligations till they have opened all their temples to Harijans. It is immaterial to me whether Harijans come to worship in those temples or not. It is a matter of sheer justice and penance for Caste Hindus. It is repugnant to my sense of justice that Harijans should be excluded from places of worship which are open to other Hindus. I would not consider untouchability as having been eradicated, unless and until the bar against Harijans' entry into temples is removed altogether.

Q—Will you not help us in our economic distress? To us economic uplift is the chief thing.

A—The economic uplift has not been overlooked. But I should not be satisfied if you were given crores of rupees and yet were still considered untouchables, or if palaces were built for you and you were still kept out of the pale of Hindu society. I should be satisfied only when you are put on a par with Caste Hindus in every respect. Thus economic uplift is only one of the many items in our programme.

Q—We should not conceal from you our misgivings about the money collected by you being properly used for our welfare. It depends upon your getting honest wor-

kers to work out the scheme, of whom there are very few at present. Would you not then put the funds into our hands to be used according to our discretion? We must tell you frankly we do not trust the present workers.

A—I do not mean to say that no Harijans can take part in the disbursement of the funds. But as the whole is conceived as a matter of penance and reparation on the part of Caste Hindus, they have to find the best way of using them. They must be guided by the advice of Harijans, but the actual administration of the funds has to rest with them. I may assure you that the least part of these funds will be spent for propaganda. By far the greater part will go directly into the pockets of Harijans. I have no reason to believe that all those who are doing Harijan service today are actuated by selfish motives. There must be a few cases where workers are not as you and I would have them to be, but the majority have taken up this work in the proper spirit. Many of them are of unimpeachable character and would do credit to any movement. Apart from all this, however, I want you to visualize the conditions of thousands of Harijans who are so suppressed that they have fallen below the average standard of humanity. They are voiceless. They consider themselves sub-human. In Orissa, some years back, an old man came to me with a straw in his mouth. I tried to awaken in him the sense that he was my equal as a human being. Another Harijan came to me in Cochin all trembling with fear. He was considered invisible in those parts, and was afraid of coming into the world of touchables. These people are a standing reproach to us. In the work I am doing, I have these in mind. This service, then, has been taken up, not so much to please Harijans as to discharge a peremptory obligation. We want to wipe out our shame and to die in that effort if need be. We are striving to the best of our ability to render you selfless service, but if Harijans do not accept it, I shall know that we are too late. But the month's

experience convinces me that the vast majority gladly accepts this service. We do not wish to leave a single phase of your life untouched. We approach you as servants and not as patrons.

Q—You have only added a new name 'Harijan' to the many names we already had. Even this new name is significant of our separateness from the others. Unless this sense of separateness goes in fact as well as in name, how are we to be satisfied?

A—The name 'Harijan' was suggested by one of your own class. Thousands have welcomed the name as a good substitute for the offensive names 'untouchable' and 'avarna'. So long as untouchability is not completely removed, a name to distinguish you from others will be required, and an inoffensive name is any day better than one that stinks in the nostrils. When untouchability is gone and Harijans are merged into the Hindus, I do not know by what name—Harijan or Hindu—the whole community will choose to call itself, but till that day comes, distinguishing names will have to be used. You should know that I have become a Harijan by choice and am trying to serve you as one of yourselves, and I am sure that the service will, in the end, be accepted by all Harijans, if I have offered it in a selfless spirit. I would plead with you for a little more patience to see what is being done. The Harijan Sevak Sangh has no other end in view but your good.

## WHO IS A SANATANIST?

### I

[Date 13-12-1933 Place Delhi. A talk with local Sanatanists.]

Q—What right have you to call yourself a Sanatanist as you do?

A—I claim to be a Sanatanist as I consider my conduct to be in consonance with the spirit of the scriptures. You may, if you like, reject my claim. I have studied the shastras to the best of my ability, and have arrived at the conclusion that untouchability is repugnant to the spirit of Hinduism.

Q—No one can be called a Sanatanist who does not believe in untouchability, *shrāddha*, idol worship and other outward observances.

A—The only true test of Sanatana Dharma is the touchstone of truth. Outward observance is nothing if a man lives a crooked life. What does outward form avail to a man who is a drunkard, rake and gambler?

Q—The attempt to have temples opened to Harijans is bound to lead to bloodshed.

A—That is practically impossible, as there is no compulsion contemplated by anybody. No temple is to be opened where the overwhelming opinion of temple-goers is not in favour of such opening.

## II

[Date 14-12-1933 Place In the train to Bezwada A talk with a Sanatanist pandit.]

Q—Will you kindly explain to me your position with regard to untouchability?

A (After arguing the whole case for reform)—You should realize that there are shastris who claim to be Sanatanists and who support the reformers' contention. How am I to reject their testimony as false? They fortify me in my opinion that untouchability has no sanction in the shastras. I do believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Smritis and the Puranas. But to me the Gita is the

key to a knowledge of the shastras. It enunciates the principles on which all conduct must be based. It sums up the whole of the shastras and, therefore, absolves laymen from having to explore the other books. But I go a step further. The Vedas are not the four books known as such. They contain only fragments of the originals. Eternal truth cannot be buried in or confined to printed books. The Vedas are, therefore, indefinable and unwritten. They reside in one's heart. And our shastras tell us what discipline and study are necessary for opening out the heart for receiving the truth. One's experience, therefore, must be the final guide. The written word undoubtedly helps, but even that has to be interpreted, and when there are conflicting interpretations, the seeker is the final arbiter. I had to make my choice. Years ago I made it, and came to the conclusion that the shastras did not countenance untouchability as we practise it today.

23

ONLY THE PUREST OF SACRIFICES

[Date 16-12-1933 Place Bezwada A talk with Harijan workers of the Andhra province]

Q—What do you expect of workers in this cause?

A—I cannot too strongly urge on you the necessity of making only the purest of sacrifices for the sake of this cause, which is essentially religious and is calculated to bring about a transformation in millions of hearts. No impurity in the shape of untruth, selfishness or hypocrisy should be allowed to creep into the movement. In no other way but by a thoroughly spotless character and the utmost purity of means can we succeed in purging Hinduism of the curse of untouchability that has taken deep

## THE RATIO QUESTION

1000 and has for centuries held sway over Hindu society. All the Hindu sages have taught by precept as well as example that religion can be protected and purified only by penance, which means a thorough cleansing of the heart.

Q—How should we deal with the opposition of those who call themselves Sanatanists?

A—I am quite clear on this point. Those who are in favour of the reform owe it to the cause they have at heart that they should not only tolerate the opponents but should hear them with the utmost patience and attention. We may never harbour anger or ill-will towards them. We want to win them over by love. We desire to convert them to our view and to invite their assistance in this cause of purification. I have an implicit belief that, if we carry on our work in the right spirit and treat the opponents not as enemies but as our own kith and kin, we are bound to succeed in winning them over to our side. Our purity and suffering will not fail to touch their hearts.

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## THE RATIO QUESTION

[Date 20-12-1933 Place Madras A talk with Mr Jamal Mahomed]

Mr Jamal Mahomed referred to the ratio question in the course of his conversation.

G—But do you know Sir Samuel Hoare said to me 'We should decide what is good for you'?

J M—I talked to him about many questions, but when I came to the ratio he said 'No, no, we are not going to argue.' Do you remember my old talk?

G—Yes, you said that we should concentrate on one

taint It is my implicit faith that, if Hinduism rids itself of the distinctions of high and low, the Hindus will be in a position to mix with Mussalmans, Christians and others on terms of absolute equality Today there is a bar between them I would like to lift that bar We may have our private religious opinions, but why should there be a bar to the meeting of hearts? Moreover you should remember that this is purely an internal reform If the Harijan becomes a whole man, he may be a political force also

Q—Is there no thought of adding to the numbers of the Hindus?

A—No I do my own reparation as a Hindu The movement started in 1920 I would have been thrown overboard if Savarna Hindus had no mind to have reform I must live down the criticism and show that the effect of Savarna Hindus doing justice to Harijans would not injure others Whatever political consequences follow from this movement, even as a bye-product, will only be good

Q—Would you win over the minorities? And, if so, how?

A—I would love to absorb also Christians and Mussalmans, not by converting them to Hinduism but by disarming their suspicion The minorities will then cease to feel themselves minorities Today there is an armed truce between Hindus, Mussalmans and others If the Hindus keep their behaviour honourable, the suspicion of the others will be disarmed Why should Hindus have any difficulty in mixing with Mussalmans and Christians? Untouchability creates a bar not merely between Hindus and Hindus but between man and man When that is gone, there will be no majority and no minority Whatever is good in your religion we shall appropriate Hinduism is as extensive as truth It has assimilated the best of all religions without overpowering them I have no designs against the Christians and Mussalmans I want them to remain good Christians and Mussalmans

In South Africa I was in the midst of hostile forces Yet I made my way I had the warm affection of so many Englishmen, Dutch and Boers If internal purity among Hindus takes place, there will be no cause for Muslims, Christians or Anglo-Indians to be afraid or to harbour suspicion I shall, if necessary, die in the attempt to bring about this purity Take me at my word The very solution offered by the Hindu Mahasabha is open to question For me there was no question of haggling As a member of the majority community it was not for me to haggle I would far rather stand out I have said to the minorities, and say even now, that this only would be the honourable course for me if I feel the strength of the majority But today I have no strength or self-confidence The Hindus are nominally a majority, really they are a minority The Europeans in India are a drop in the ocean Yet they don't feel themselves to be in a hopeless minority, because they are the ruling race I want to dislodge them from that position, and say to them 'Come down Let us fight for the freedom of India' The official world also depends on the commercial Europeans In Champaran the European planters were the Government It could not be otherwise If anybody under the shadow of the Harijan movement tries to bully it will not be the majority community Very few of them are given to bullying My fast was meant to prevent the movement from going to a low level I merely appeal to those who believe in untouchability, and tell them that untouchability is not an integral part of the Hindu faith but a superstition The awakening is wonderful I tell the masses that they should not come to meetings on account of my political or past services Whatever my past services were, they are gone They have had their reward I have come today with a religious mission I have asked them not to attend these meetings merely out of affection Still they come in crowds Harijans mix freely with Caste Hindus The latter follow me even to Harijan



quarters, which they did not do before I take the masses only so far as they are prepared to go I do not want to injure their susceptibilities I open temples with the utmost caution I refused to open a temple at Deoli because the trustees were said to be sharply divided over the issue, though the vast majority of temple-goers was in favour of opening the temple to Harijans immediately At all the temples I have opened, the trustees as well as priests have unequivocally consented to the opening There is a class that says Don't go in for the Temple Entry Bill The Bill is necessary as a permissive measure Today there is an intriguing position What prevails today is not Hindu law but judge-made law I have been trying to keep the movement sound and pure My passion for religious purity is behind it If we don't shed untouchability Hinduism must die it deserves to die Then I won't shed a single tear If Miss Mayo had balanced evil against good, I would have had nothing to say

### FILLED WITH HOPE

[Date 22-12-1933 Place Madras An answer to the question of a press representative asking for his impression of the three days' visit to Madras]

G—As usual, I have experienced nothing but deep affection from the people wherever I have gone But I must confess that I was unprepared for the vast demonstration that I witnessed at the beach and the demonstrations that I witnessed during the visits to several labour areas The numbers that attended these demonstrations everywhere exceeded past records Whilst there is no doubt that personal affection and attachment had to do a

## DEBTORS AND CREDITORS

great deal with them, I am convinced that the vast mass of humanity that seemed to cling to me fully understood and appreciated what I stood for and what I had come for. If their religious sense had revolted against the drive against untouchability, the exhibition of their affection, even if I had not lost it altogether, would have been tempered with moderation and restraint, if not recognizable coolness. I am used to reading the mass mind by taking at a sweep the expression in their eyes and their general demeanour. I could find no trace of disapproval of what I have been doing in connection with untouchability. The manner in which they came forward with their contributions when I asked for them was also significant, and went to strengthen the impression I have given. I am therefore, filled with hope for the future. I feel that even in the South untouchability is shaken to its very roots. I would like to say to my Sanatanist friends that I have no desire whatsoever to wound their susceptibilities. I want to find points of agreement, and I know that there are many and that points of disagreement are few. If my approach to them cannot bring about immediate agreement, I know that time will, if I have the patience, which I feel I have.

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## DEBTORS AND CREDITORS

[Date 24-12-1933 Place Rajahmundry A talk with Harijans]

Q—We have sufficient men among us who are enlightened and efficient. They should be entrusted with the reins of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Caste Hindus may help in the work, but the office-bearers should be all Harijans.

A —The important question that you have raised is that the Harijan Sevak Sangh should be principally manned and managed by you. This shows that you have not understood the origin of the Board. The Board has been formed to enable Savarna Hindus to do repentance and reparation to you. It is thus a Board of debtors, and you are the creditors. You owe nothing to the debtors, and therefore, so far as this Board is concerned the initiative has to come from the debtors. You have to certify whether the debtors discharge their obligation or not. What you have to do is to enable and help them to discharge their obligation that is to say, you can tell them how they can discharge their obligation, you can tell them what in your opinion will satisfy the great body of Harijans. They may or may not accept your advice. If they do not, naturally they run the risk of incurring your displeasure. A debtor may go to a creditor and say to him 'I have brought so much money, will you take it?' The creditor may say 'Off you go, I want full payment or none.' Or the creditor may say 'What you have brought is not part payment, but worse.' All these things you, creditors, can do. And so, when this Board was established and some Harijan friends wrote to me I told them that Harijans should form themselves into advisory boards or boards of inspection. I want you to understand this distinction thoroughly. You will please see that there is no desire not to accept your advice or co-operation or help. I am only putting before you the true and logical position. This is a period of grace that God has given to Caste Hindus, and it is during this period of grace that they have to prove their sincerity. And I am moving heaven and earth and am going about from place to place, simply in order that this obligation on the part of Savarna Hindus may be fully discharged.

Q —The Board should appoint advisory committees of its own selection.

A —As a fellow Harijan by choice I tell you. Do not ask the Board to select a committee of Harijans, but select

## CASTE AND VARNA

your own committee and say to the Board that you have selected these members, and that it should carry on correspondence with them. There is another danger in the suggestion. There may be factions and divisions among you. Different committees may be appointed by different factions. The Board may recognize all of them. But that will be unfortunate. Let there be no quarrels among you. Present a united front to the debtors. The debtors may put you against one another, though the Board, if it is worth its name, will not do that. The Congress has been able to present a united front. Today the Congress is full of simple men like you and me. You should have a body of businesslike men who will put down with a strong hand all quarrels among you. Then you will dominate the Board without being on it. Do not be easily satisfied. Tell the debtors you are not going to be satisfied with five shillings in the pound, but that you must have twenty shillings in the pound. This is not a matter for bargaining.

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## CASTE AND VARNA

[Date 2-1-1934 Place Cuddapah A talk with Harijan workers]

Q—Do you wish the caste system to remain or to go?

A—The Harijan movement goes to the root of the evil. If untouchability goes, the castes as we know them today go.

Q—Surely not.

A—I talk of the extreme form of untouchability. But the evil is so widespread that in some form or other it runs through the whole Hindu social system and corrupts it. The distinction of high and low is at the bottom

of untouchability If the extreme form goes, the rest is bound to go If it does not, our movement will be a mere camouflage So long as the idea of high and low is not abolished, untouchability cannot be said to have been abolished

Q—What, then, of the *varna* which you seek to defend?

A—I do defend it But you must know my definition of it It is as different from the present caste system as chalk is from cheese *Varna* as I understand it is an economic law which operates, whether we know it or not Conformation to it will bring happiness to mankind Disregard for it is disrupting society today all over the world *Varna* is the antithesis of the doctrine of 'might is right' It abolishes all distinctions between high and low

Q—But nobody gives the meaning you give to *varna*

A—That may be Evolution of human thought is evolution of the meaning of words I have no difficulty in seeing my meaning in the original *mantra* from which the theory of *varna* is derived, nor in the Gita verses referring to *varna* Regulations about dining and marriage have no direct connection with *varna* The distinguishing feature of *varna* is occupation

Q—Then will you restrict everyone to his father's occupation?

A—Neither I nor anybody else can impose the restriction on anyone *Varnadharma* is not a man-made law to be imposed or relaxed at his will It is natural to man in his regenerate state He may disregard it to his cost Everyone is free to follow or disobey it It was discovered in India and followed more or less faithfully and knowingly for centuries It is being followed ignorantly and helplessly even now by the bulk of the people In the eye of that law, Brahmin and Bhangi are absolutely on an equal footing A Bhangi who does his work willingly and faithfully will find favour with God A

## WHAT SHALL WE DO?

Brahmin who, no matter how learned he may be, does not follow his calling will incur divine displeasure. The law does not confer privileges, it defines duties. Truest democracy can be evolved only by a due recognition of, and obedience to, the law. Thus, in my opinion, there is no evil in *varna*. The evil consists in considering one *varna* as higher than another.

Q—Surely the *varna* that you describe exists only in your imagination. What we see around us is the solid fact of hundreds of castes, each claiming to be higher than some other.

A—That is unfortunately so. I am simply answering your question and showing you the vital difference between caste and *varna*. Castes are a human manufacture, are daily weakening and have to go. *Varna* as defined by me may be said to exist in my imagination. Its definition is not imaginary. It is inherent in the *mantra* on which it is based, and is given in so many words in the Bhagavadgita.

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## WHAT SHALL WE DO?

[Date 5-1-1934 Place Mysore Two talks with Harijans and Harijan workers]

Q—(from Harijan workers) What work can we do? The Sanatanists say that untouchability should exist.

A—Simply take charge of all Harijans. Mix with them on equal terms. Treat them as your children or your blood brothers and sisters. Take a personal interest in them. Find out the mode of their life. Explain Hindu life to them. Be patient when they don't listen. Then there is the tremendous question of education, which includes the education of the grown-ups. Education means

not book education, but a knowledge of how human beings should behave. Persuade them to give up carrion and beef. When you show a record of unimpeachable character, your work will show results. Savarna Hindus will say 'These persons are well-behaved. They are not reformers preaching licence. This is not one of their pranks.'

Q—What should we do about the question of temples?

A—You can persuade the people at large, so that they may be ready for the change when temples come to be opened. When the State or the priests are converted, temples will be opened by force of public opinion. This work is its own propaganda. No speechifying is required. Your work will have far more effect. If you argue at all, let it be simply cold argument against not the opponent but the opponent's argument.

A little later Gandhiji had a talk with a group of Harijans. In reply to their representation he said

"You say that you are making a great effort to show that you are every whit as good as other Hindus. Secondly, you say that you are debarred from learning Sanskrit. If that is so, it is a matter of deep sorrow. But no power on earth can possibly prevent you from learning what you want to learn. I should love to think that many of you want to learn Sanskrit."

Q—Would it not be possible for some of us, young men, to have scholarships to learn in North India?

A—I like that question of yours. I make the unreserved promise that you will get scholarships for this purpose from the Central Board. I would like that contact between the North and the South so far as Harijans and others are concerned, for, whether we belong to the North or the South, the East or the West, we are sons of the same soil. If you go to the North, you will be able to prosecute Sanskrit studies to your heart's content. But even if you remain here, it should be perfectly possible for you to prosecute your Sanskrit studies.

## WHAT CAN REFORMERS DO?

Q —What other advice would you give us?

A —In the first place, you should conform to rules of hygiene and sanitation, should conform to laws of *shaucha*, internal and external. Internal *shaucha* consists in taking the name of God as the first thing on getting up in the morning. That is breakfast for the soul. External *shaucha* consists in a bath, which means perfect cleaning of the body. As I passed through your cheri, I saw many youngsters whose hands were not clean, nor their eyes and ears. Then you should give up beef and carrion.

Q —We do not eat beef here.

A —It is a matter of deep joy to me, and of congratulation to you, that you have given up beef-eating. I should like you to be able to say the same thing about drink. What is the use of parting with money for some coloured water which makes us so mad that we forget the distinction between mother, wife and sister? There are some who say that drink has been prescribed for us. I can tell you without fear of contradiction that this is a suggestion of the devil, and it is not written in the shastras. I would ask you, brothers and sisters, not to go near the devil. I hope you will take my advice to heart. I shall have great joy when you are able to say that you have given up drink.

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## WHAT CAN REFORMERS DO?

[Date 6-1-1934 Place Bangalore A talk with Harijan workers.]

Q —People ask us what would be done with the funds which are being collected. Is there any body with a constitution to administer the funds? What proportion



of the money shall we get for use in the State? 75 per cent have been promised to us. Will there be any representative of ours on that body?

A—There is the Central Board of the Servants of Untouchables Society operating on the funds in consultation with me. 75 per cent of the collections will undoubtedly go to the provinces, provided there are proper schemes and also proper workers to look after them. Given these two conditions, the money will be held in trust by the Central Board. 75 per cent is the minimum. 25 per cent will be kept back, because the Central Board won't now be able to raise any funds at least for a year. Beyond that I don't think any constitution to be necessary. The Central Board is your bank. If necessary, it will give back to the provinces 75 per cent there and then. If you have any other and better suggestions, tell me.

Q—What about building better quarters for Harijans out of these funds?

A—Delhi is the blackest spot as regards Harijan bastis. Calcutta comes second. In Madras their quarters are bad but bearable. In Delhi they are unbearable. I would like to supplement here what the Government are doing. Where the Government can be coaxed to do it, they should be allowed to do so. I give this advice in British India. I am the same non-cooperator that I was, but not in this matter. I won't help the Government, but I would see to it that my work does not overlap their work but supplements it. Here there is no question of non-cooperation. I would ask myself for the Government's help. It is the primary duty of a Government to look after the welfare of the meanest of its citizens. Where the Government is wilfully negligent, you can undertake this work, as they did in Calcutta because the Calcutta Corporation could not be easily moved to do it. There is no such condition here. Have a network of hives of Harijan quarters where workers can live. I would ask you to do that, but you must measure your capacity. It would

be no discredit to us if it was said of us that we did not do this work. Make-believe would be disastrous, and I am going to resist it.

Q—What else can we do?

A—I am here to advertise the Harijan cause and nothing else. We must not do anything for spectacular effect. Our work may not be pretentious, but must be solid. Intimate touch with the Harijans can never be established by the State. That is the essential work of the social reformers which we are. Temple entry work is to be done by workers specially qualified for it. Individual workers, if they show character, will not only affect the Harijans, but will affect the mass mind. The masses will feel that 'these workers are not Europeanized reformers, they are like ourselves, but they exercise greater restraint.' If there is one true worker, he will multiply himself.

'HINDU' AND 'HARIJAN'

[Date 7-1-1934 Place Bangalore A talk with Harijan workers]

Q—Why should we, Hindus, not call ourselves 'Harijans' instead of reserving the name for only a section among us?

A—I should be delighted. Let us all be called Harijans. That is the finest thing. That will happen when Savarna Hindus will come to their senses. But when that day comes, some name for the whole community will be necessary. The names 'Hari' and 'Hara' in respect of God make no difference. Similarly it will make no difference whether we are called 'Hindus' or 'Harijans'. When the Yeravda Pact was made I called the

so-called untouchables 'Harijans', i.e. the children of God

Q—When will the word 'Harijan' go into the dictionary?

A—It will go into the dictionary when this movement is over. The dictionary meaning of the word 'Harijan' will be 'those who were once known as untouchables'. Then either Savarna Hindus will have become Harijans, or all Harijans will have become Hindus. Today Harijans do go into temples without declaring their caste. But it means no credit for the Savarna Hindus. It is a disaster that this thing is done stealthily. Harijans travel in railways, rubbing shoulders with Savarnas. It is no virtue of the Savarnas. There is no reason, no logic about what they are doing. Therefore, while talking to Harijans, I have said that my primary business today is to affect the Savarna Hindu mind and to make it respond. And because the Savarnas respond, all these things happen. The removal of untouchability will be accompanied by so many signs that it cannot possibly be mistaken. As time goes on, more and more workers will come out to die and live for the thing. Today superstition, fear and cowardice stalk the land. This mighty thing the Savarna Hindus must do if we are to live. But if our day is gone, they won't listen to the voice of warning.

Q—There have been many conversions among Harijans. What should we do to prevent them?

A—It is a marvel that there have not been more conversions. There is something that keeps them in Hinduism. It is a glory to them. But I must do my repentance without regard to whether they remain in Hinduism or not. I have no other and indirect manner of preventing conversions. Conversions will be prevented when we act on the square. The Harijan Sevak Sangh is in no sense a missionary organization. It is not anti-Muslim or anti-Christian. It is for the Savarna Hindus to do reparation, whether the Harijans may remain in Hinduism or not. In 1932 when I saw disaster overtaking

## GRATITUDE TO HOSTS

Hinduism I fasted, I put my whole life into the balance

Q —How to tackle the Sanatanists' opposition? They say, among other things, that the Harijans are impure because they remove carcasses

A —If I were in the place of the Harijans, I would say to these Sanatanists 'Then I am not going to remove carcasses' There is a tremendous awakening among Harijans They cannot be molested any longer The days are gone when such things could be repeated with impunity I would remove carcasses if I got the price for it I would consider it an honourable calling Today foolish Savarna Hindus don't understand their own interest

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## GRATITUDE TO HOSTS

[Date 9-1-1934 Place Bangalore A talk with members of the Reception Committee]

Q —What is your advice to us, Mahatmaji?

A —Advice I have none Your omissions you know, commissions I know The latter are quite enough and more than enough for me My wants are exacting They have been more than supplied For if I could not be comfortable here, I could not be comfortable anywhere I am grateful to His Highness the Maharaja Sahib, grateful to the Dewan Sahib, and grateful to all friends who have always been so kind to me Besides this human hospitality, there is the kindness of Nature also The climate here is cool all the year round I hope I shall be able to have your affection also in the future

# HARIJAN SERVICE

[Date 14-1-1934 Place Calcut A talk with Harijan workers ]

Q—What are we to do if Harijans leave Hinduism in spite of all that we are doing?

A—After we do reparation, they may do whatever they like So long as they are Hindus, Savarna Hindus have a duty to them We will go to Harijans not as patrons but as servants But we will not pamper them We will pamper them only if we have a political motive Our bitter experience cannot alter the fact that it is the Savarna Hindus who must straighten their conduct I make an appeal to them It goes straight as an arrow I take them at their face value God is not going to judge me for the base motives of others

Q—What of the economic betterment and education of the Harijans?

A—The movement for their economic betterment and education is part of our reparation It is an urgent question because I prize my faith I am not going to say that I am born a Hindu, therefore I am a Hindu I must see that I have grown in Hindu faith I have got to serve peasants also, but I must serve this cause If I serve peasants, not as a Hindu but as an Indian or as one of the larger humanity, that is part of the Swaraj movement

## KAUMUDI'S RENUNCIATION

[Date 16-1-1934 Place Calicut During the Harijan tour Gandhiji asked Savarna Hindu women to give their ornaments as their personal donations In Andhra, particularly, at every meeting there was a shower of ornaments In Malabar, at Badagara, young girl named Kaumudi, aged 16, gave him all her ornaments Gandhiji reminded her that she was not to have the ornaments replaced She resolutely assented to the condition Gandhiji prefaced his autograph with the remark 'Your renunciation is a truer ornament than the jewellery you have discarded,' and gave it to Kaumudi The talk recorded below took place three days later at Calicut ]

On the last day of Gandhiji's stay at Calicut, she came to see Gandhiji along with her father Not having accompanied Gandhiji to Badagara, I saw Kaumudi for the first time There was no guile about her She spoke gently and was very reticent She had studied up to the Intermediate, and followed the conversation well Gandhiji wanted to know more about her sacrifice He asked whether she had come to the meeting with her mind made up to make the sacrifice or she made the decision instantaneously at the meeting

"She had made up her mind at home," replied the father, "and had obtained our permission"

"But will the mother not feel sorry to see you without any jewellery?"

"She will," said Kaumudi, "but I am sure she will not compel me to wear it again"

"But when you get married, as in due course you will, your husband will, perhaps, not like to see you without any ornaments What will you do then? I have a moral difficulty before me I have written an article for *Harijan* about your sacrifice which is indeed wonderful I have said in that article that you would never wear any ornaments again If you are not pre-

pared for that, I shall have to alter that part of the article, or you will have to stand adamant against the wishes of your prospective husband. That you, a Malabari girl, may be capable of doing. Or you will have to select a husband who will be satisfied to have you without ornaments. You may tell me frankly what you feel."

Kaumudi slowly took in the full import of what Gandhiji said. It was a great thing she was called on to do. She had to make a momentous decision. She cogitated for a while, and then uttered only one sentence: "I will select a husband who will not compel me to wear ornaments."

Gandhiji's eyes beamed with delight. "I had Annapurna," he said. "She was married and yet she discarded all her jewellery, and she kept her pledge till the moment of her death. Now I have you." And there was hardly a women's meeting hereafter at which he did not refer to Kaumudi's noble sacrifice.

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## CONVERSIONS

[Date 19-1-1934 Place Kottayam, in Travancore State. A talk with Harijan workers.]

Q—Why should we, Congressmen, not have a programme of conversions?

A—Congressmen must keep absolutely aloof from a programme of conversions. It is a bad thing. It is much better to ask Harijans to become good men. If a Christian Harijan, for instance, asks a Congressman as to what he should do, the Congressman will say 'Remain what you are born.'

Q—Why not keep Harijan cooks?

A—Savarna Hindus are not called upon to do so.

## ANOTHER GREAT SACRIFICE

It depends on circumstances Don't employ Harijan cooks surreptitiously Where there is suppression of truth, there is falsehood, and it is taboo

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## ANOTHER GREAT SACRIFICE

[Date 20-1-1934 Place Trivandrum A talk with a young gul]

At Trivandrum, among the many visitors was a girl of seventeen As she came and stood before Gandhiji, he asked "Who are you?"

"A little gul," she replied

"What has a little gul to do with jewellery?" Gandhiji had seen the many ornaments she was wearing

"Because I want to remain a girl," replied Meenakshi

"Then you must not wear jewellery" And Gandhiji narrated the story of Kaumudi's sacrifice "Kaumudi was sixteen, younger than you by a year, yet she discarded all her jewellery"

Meenakshi's eyes brightened "I, too, would like to give my jewellery," she said

"Have you your parents' permission?"

"I will get it"

"I know Malabar girls are free"

"Shall I give it to you?"

"Yes, to Harijans"

"That is what I mean"

"If you think I am a *bona fide* Harijan, then give it to me If you think I am a humbug, do not give it to me I tempt all girls to give up their jewellery I know it is a hard thing for a girl to do There are all sorts of fashions today in society I say, handsome is that hand-



some does "

"If I give myself to you?"

"Yes, I have your cousin, and now I have you "

"That is settled "

"Even then I give you one night to consider "

Next morning, when I saw Meenakshi, I could not easily recognize her All her ornaments had gone "Where are your ornaments?" I asked her

"I have given them up!"

"To Gandhiji?"

"No, that I could not do," she said "My father has debts, and I cannot give away the ornaments But I have made up my mind never to wear them again "

"Are your parents reconciled to the change you have made?"

"Father is But mother finds it difficult to do so "

Later in the day, Meenakshi with her parents came to Gandhiji, and gave him a gold bangle and a necklace for the Harijan cause Gandhiji had known beforehand of the debts He said to the parents "You may not give me these articles Discharge whatever part of the debt you can with the ornaments that Meenakshi has discarded She is never to ask for them again "

Tears flowed down Meenakshi's cheeks Her emotion was too deep for words She had made a life-long decision

Gandhiji then asked the mother why she could not bless her daughter in her noble decision

"She will have to be married," replied the mother, "and it will be difficult for us to find out a husband who will be contented to have her without ornaments "

"You may have no anxiety on that score," said Gandhiji, pacifying her fears "I shall find you, when the time comes, not one but fifty candidates for Meenakshi's hand, and you may select any one of them "

The mother blessed Meenakshi's decision

WITH RATIONALISTS

[Date 23-1-1934 Place Cape Comorin A talk with a group of Harijans who called themselves rationalists]

Q—What is your programme with regard to the Harijan work?

A—My programme is to provide for them schools, hostels, medical aid, facilities for water—generally to do everything that would put them on a par with others

Q—What of Christian and Mussalman untouchables? We want a programme affecting them also

A—I have no such grand programme applicable to all Not that I do not like it, but it is beyond my power to handle It comes under the movement of Swaraj When Swaraj comes, it will be applicable to all, to all the poor of India Swaraj means, among other things, a redress of their wrongs

Q—In South India we know they are paid wages in kind and there are no fixed hours of work Why do you not try to get for them more wages and fixed hours of work, instead of appealing for temple entry?

A—Surely, you are wrong You will find only a passing reference to it in all my speeches during the tour But I cannot do without it

Q—But do you not say this is a movement for self-purification?

A—I do There is no question about that I said that at Palluruthi in the plainest terms possible The Harijans there accused me of pleading for reform as a Hindu I pleaded guilty I do not hide my colours They said that, if they got all economic facilities, everything would follow I said it won't And I can give you many instances in support of what I say You may revile temples if you like You may not go to them But you must have the right to go and worship there You may or may not use it Not all the Thiyyas feel as you do

Those very Thiyyas at Palluruthi took me to a temple which was essentially a Hindu temple. They were all young men. And did not Narayan Guru Swami establish temples? I know of thousands of Harijans who, when they hear of a temple being opened, have a new lustre in their eyes. They do not know why, but they feel different men. I have seen them transported with joy on entering a temple. They felt themselves face to face with the Deity.

Q—We respect you only as a revolutionary leader of a revolutionary people.

A—Then say a Hindu revolutionary is appearing on the scene and revolutionizing Hinduism. But if I have done wrong to somebody, who is to do reparation but I? I say to Harijans, you may accept the reparation or reject it.

Q—You gave us the name 'Harijan'. We feel, therefore, as if we are a separate community to be known by a separate name. Are you not wounding our susceptibilities by giving us this name?

A—I may be wounding the susceptibilities of half a dozen, but not of others. No other name has been received all round with so much approbation as this has. You should remember that it is not of my coming. So long as they have to be separately designated, some name is necessary. Then why not one that is inoffensive? I have so many nationalist friends. One of them complimented me and said 'You speak like a rationalist'. I said 'What else did you think me to be?' You are rationalists in name, I am a rationalist in spirit. But I tell you this much: let us agree to differ in the matter of temple entry, and let us agree to work together where we do not differ.

The young friends agreed to this.

## GOD OF TRUTH AND LOVE

[Date 2-2-1934 Place Coonoor A talk with Harijans in a local chern Gandhi spoke to them of what they were expected to do ]

Gandhi—You know that this movement that is now going on is a movement for self-purification Those who call themselves Savarna Hindus have to purify themselves by fraternizing with Harijans and ceasing to consider them untouchable or lower than themselves Harijans have to do certain things not by way of exchange but because they are Hindus They should, therefore, conform to rules of clean life—washing themselves both internally and externally, giving up carrion-eating, giving up beef-eating, giving up intoxicating drinks and drugs, irrespective of what other people do or don't do I understand that here you offer the buffalow as a sacrifice in order to appease goddess Kali You must not for one moment think that God is pleased by sacrifice of animals There are Savarna Hindus so called who also resort to this bad practice But all the world over it is now recognized that there is no religion in sacrificing any animal or anyone There can be no merit in sacrificing animals to appease goddess Kali or any other god or goddess After all there is but one God whom we worship as Kali or Vishnu, Krishna, Shiva or Brahmā There is but one God and no other That God is the God of truth and love and not of vengeance Therefore I hope that henceforth there will be no parties among you, but that you will all unite in stopping the sacrifice of animals to God

## TO FELLOW-SCAVENGERS

[Date 2-2-1934 Place Coonoor A talk with scavengers]

Gandhiji—You should know that I am a scavenger myself by choice, and you must take me literally when I tell you that I have cleaned hundreds of cheris in my life. Everyone in the ashram which I was conducting—and there were women also in the ashram—had to do this work every day. I call scavenging as one of the most honourable occupations to which mankind is called. I don't consider it an unclean occupation by any means. That you have to handle dirt is true. But that every mother is doing and has to do. But nobody says a mother's occupation is unclean. And yet the scavenger's occupation is considered an unclean occupation. Therefore I say that those who call themselves Caste Hindus commit a sin when they consider themselves higher than Harijans. I am going up and down the country to convince Savarna Hindus that it is a sin to consider themselves superior to or higher than anyone else. But I am trying also to tell fellow-scavengers that, while we may handle dirt, we must be clean ourselves both inwardly and outwardly. After we have done the cleansing we must cleanse ourselves and put on clean clothes. I know many scavengers eat carrion and beef. Those who are doing this must abstain. Many of them are given to the evil habit of drink. Drink is a bad, filthy, unclean, degrading habit. A man who drinks intoxicating liquor forgets the distinction between wife, mother and sister. I would beseech you to give up all evil habits, and you will at once find that you are accepted as honourable members of society without any stain on you.

'YOU HOLD ME AS HOSTAGE'

[Date 4-2-1934 Place Coonoor A talk with a deputation of the Adī Hindu Association of Coimbatore The deputation gave him a memorandum which he read and dealt with the points raised in it one by one The memorandum concluded by saying 'We feel sorry that your august person has not taken birth in the Adī Hindu community to realize our practical difficulties' He began by referring to this]

Gandhiji—I re-echo your last sentiment It would have been very nice, a favour done by God, if I were born a Adī Hindu I say this not for the first time I said in 1921 at a meeting of Harijans 'I do want *moksha* I do not want to be reborn But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition' A friend said 'What prevents you from being a Harijan now?' I said 'To my mind I am a Harijan, but the public and the Adī Hindus won't accept me as such Today I live with them, eat with them, adopt their daughters and marry them to Caste Hindus Yet I cannot be accepted as a full-fledged Harijan'

Referring to the objection against the use of the new name 'Harijan', Gandhiji said—The word 'Harijan' is not a coinage of mine It is a good name in the place of an odious one It has all but unanimously accepted by the community Objection against it is taken here in the South, though even here it is not objected to by a large number When I tell the Adī Hindus what I mean by the word, they are delighted But I do not insist on it I would be glad to call you by any name you like—Adī Hindu, Adī Dravida, untouchable, invisible—though I would use the latter names most reluctantly I say you are invidiously treated, but the days of this invidiousness

are numbered. The instances of inhuman treatment which you have cited are true, but they are not true of the vast mass of Hindu humanity. I am now having an ocular demonstration of this. The opposition against the reform movement is day after day becoming less and less. What is pleasing to me is that tens of thousands listen with approval to my unqualified denunciation of untouchability. Caste system as we see it today is also a form of untouchability. It must go. I hope I shall receive your help wherever you can conscientiously give it. My work will then be smoothened, and results will be quickened.

Dealing next with their objection against the method of election laid down in the Yeravda Pact, Gandhiji said—In regard to elections, I would quite endorse your fears if you were at the mercy of the Caste Hindus. You fear that a person who had almost sold himself to Caste Hindus might be elected. But such a man would be prevented from being elected under the new scheme. The first choice will be yours. A person whom you don't choose will not be elected. Whoever is elected will be your nominee and not that of Caste Hindus. None will be elected who does not command, irrespective of Caste Hindu votes, a large number of your own votes. Nobody has raised an objection to this. Harijans have objected to it on the score of expensiveness. But it need not involve any expenses whatsoever. There you will have my sympathy and whole-hearted co-operation. I echo your sentiment that you don't want any reform in the Constitution that does not jealously guard Harijan interests. The anti-untouchability movement is so revolutionary that hereafter reformers will be in a majority and not in a minority. The vast majority of Caste Hindus will turn the scales in favour of Harijans and not against them. If we ever reach constitutional reforms, reformers will be in an overwhelming majority. When voting becomes popular and is extended to the masses, reformers will sweep the polls. I would like you to share that

conviction

Your memorandum has got intrinsic merit. Therefore it is an important document. It contains truth which is unchallengeable. Exaggeration can be felt if it were read by a stranger. Even if what you have said is true in individual cases, it is not universal. This is the only caution I should like to give you. This is a doubly important document written on behalf of Harijans and signed by so many, showing that you are hurt at so many iniquities taking place in India which is as much your motherland as mine. There are some of you who say that you were the original inhabitants of India, and that Caste Hindus were usurpers. I don't believe that there were hordes of invaders, and that before that India was a country of barbarians and was civilized by men coming from Central Asia. India was civilized from centuries and centuries. Harijans were Caste Hindus who did not conform to certain rules of conduct and were therefore excluded. It was no non-violence but violence. The virus of untouchability, wherever it is, must go. It is a most devilish thing. No language is too strong to condemn the sin.

[Here someone came in to remind Gandhiji that the appointed time was over, and that it was time for the evening meal. Gandhiji said 'I cannot send these friends away without giving them my whole soul']

He then concluded by saying—You hold me as a hostage for the due fulfilment of the Yeravda Pact. As a hostage I am travelling from one end of India to the other, leaving the comparative peace of Yeravda.

An old dame, who had accompanied the deputation, presented a couple of oranges. Gandhiji accepted with great delight this gift of love and said 'I will make it a point of eating these two oranges as they will be charged with all your blessings'. And the friends departed amidst joy and laughter.



## TERRORISM AND NON-VIOLENCE

[Date 6-2-1934 Place Tirupur A talk with Shri C Rajagopalachari who was released from the Coimbatore jail that very morning and joined Gandhiji at Tirupur The latter was very much perturbed at the time over the stringent restrictions imposed on the people by the Government in some parts of Bengal In the course of the talk Gandhiji made the following remarks]

Gandhiji, referring to the recent orders of the Government in Bengal, said 'This is the downright humiliation of a whole people, so that they cannot raise their voice or head It is a scientific edition of terrorism, and seeks to kill the soul of the people

'In India it may take a century or more before any movement on violent lines takes place There is also my hope that non-violence will still be sufficiently active in our midst I am more and more convinced of the truth of the position taken up at Poona—both ways that civil resistance must be continued, and must be restricted to those who have an implicit faith in non-violence I weaned some persons from going to jail, and said to them 'If it is for my sake that you are going, or if your faith is half and half, you shall not go Let those alone who have full faith go' I saw that civil disobedience was bound to be defeated as a mass movement My original instinct was that we were not prepared for a mass movement We discovered our own unpreparedness Therefore individual civil disobedience of this type was adopted It was to be carried out not as a matter of policy but of faith'

Speaking of persons who believed in civil disobedience but could not go to prison, Gandhiji said 'Then there are those who have a living faith in civil disobedience and yet are not able to go to prison There is a large number of these Take — They are all convinced that this is the only method, but they are not able to go

## HOW TO SERVE

to jail today I am convinced that when the time comes for them they would mount the gallows Today it is with them the weakness of the flesh As Paul said "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" Such honest men's conviction is bound to be effective'

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## HOW TO SERVE

[Date 10-2-1934 Place Trichinopoly A talk with Harijan workers Some of the workers used to do cleaning in a cheri, and bathe Harijan children with oil and soap]

Gandhiji—You have got to continue this work till you impress on their minds that they have to do it themselves There are ways and ways of doing a thing We can do the cleaning of the cheri like scavengers, but it would be no good We have to seek their assistance and co-operation If it takes fifty years, continue the work for fifty years I should invite them to do this work It is no good doing it even for a day, if not done carefully We go there as servants of this type, i.e. as teachers teaching them good habits Why is money spent over this work? No money would be needed if there were honorary workers The cleaning cost per visit comes to Rs 2 for oil and soap With voluntary unpaid workers we can do the work There is no need to give a pice for feeding after the bath On principle I would object to it They should take interest in that cleanliness If you use oil, they should know why it should be used If you give them refreshments, they must be justified independently, but not as an inducement to be clean You have to pay them visits of inspection If they say 'We are not going to do it,' you may not do it I would leave them I would take up only those who would do it themselves We may

not bribe them, and deceive ourselves that we are making progress, when really they are doing it for pay. I have not given any inducement to my own children. The thing itself must be an inducement. In Andhra speeches I said every worker must have one Harijan servant in his house.

Dr. Rajan—The Salem Municipality passed a resolution about licences to hotels, but the Government overruled it.

G—The question to be considered is whether on principle the Salem resolution is sound or not.

Dr. Rajan—Can municipalities pass such a resolution?

G—It is a duty of municipalities to refuse licences to public institutions that debar some people. The resolution should be to the effect that no hotel would get a licence which would refuse entry to Harijans.

Q—Is there no coercion in it?

A—Coercion there is. Coercion of that type is always there. Restraint on public activity in this sense is always there.

## VARNA AND CHANGE OF FAITH

[Date 10-2-1934 Place Trichinopoly A talk with Harijans]

Q—Why does God create unhappiness and misery in the world?

A—The question about God is an old question, not a new one. You may as well ask why God creates His creation at all. If I were able to answer the question about God satisfactorily, I would become God myself. Seeing that there are many ways of God which we don't understand or only half understand, we say that His ways

are inscrutable That He is all-powerful we see every moment But why He permits unhappiness and misery in the world is more than I can say

Q —What has *varna-dharma* to do with untouchability?

A —The 'untouchables' are not one of the four *varnas* They are considered to be outside the pale of the *varnas* I don't say I want the *varnas* I simply say *varna-dharma* is there whether we like it or not *Varna-dharma* has nothing to do with untouchability

Q —Why are 98 per cent of the staff of the Harijan Sevak Sangh Brahmins?

A —If it is a fact that the Sangh has 98 per cent of Brahmins on its staff, it is the most creditable performance, showing that all Brahmins are not bad, and that those who work in the Sangh are repentant and are in earnest about this reform My own conviction is that real Brahmins have nothing to do with untouchability

Q —Can you not make it a rule that half the members should be Harijans?

A —In the Sangh, it is not possible to have 50 per cent Harijans as members, for the simple reason that Harijans are not debtors but creditors This is a debtors' association The fear that underlies your question is wholly unjustified, because the members of the local Sangh have no authority to spend money without the sanction of the Central Board You will find the bulk of the money collected spent among Harijans The idea is to spend as little as possible on administration And you should know that members are volunteers getting nothing

Q —Do your workers deserve our confidence?

A —Yes, those who work in the Sangh do deserve your confidence If you examine their administration of funds, you will find it quite satisfactory Because you have seen some Brahmins acting badly, selfishly, you think that all Brahmins are bad It may be that Brahmins as a class are bad, though I have no proof whatsoever to confirm that charge But I have proof to show

that Brahmins connected with this movement are in an overwhelming number of cases honest men, and have joined this Sangh because they are repentant and because they feel that untouchability is a hideous wrong

Among the group there were some who are known by the name of 'Christian Harijans' They too had a talk with Gandhiji

Q—We are in the same position as Adi Dravida Hindus Are we to have any share in this movement?

A—Indirectly, yes

Q—But we do not get any benefit at all

A—You are getting indirect benefit The Christian missionaries are wide awake and recognize that they should do something

Q—We have decided to face the oppressors boldly We think of changing our faith

A—I cannot say anything about that But I feel that oppression can be no reason for changing one's faith

Q—We have no other go Shall we get any relief in future from this movement?

A—Yes I am absolutely certain that, if this movement succeeds, untouchability in Christianity is also bound to go

## ON CHRISTIANITY

[Date 18-2-1934 Place Tirupattoor A talk with some Christian inmates of the Christakula Ashram of Tirupattoor]

Q—If the Gita, according to you, teaches ahimsa, why did Krishna ask Arjuna to fight and kill men?

A—It was not for the sake of ahimsa that Arjuna refused to fight He would not kill because the Kauravas were his kinsmen Then Krishna said 'You want

to kill them. You have been all the time killing them. You can't get out of the fight now.' The argument advanced by the author of the Gita was irresistible. It took Arjuna to ahimsa. As a man seeking to know the truth I must say that the first chapter did not worry me in the least. For me it proved a good book. It took me to the right path.

Q—How could you reconcile yourself to believing all religions to be true?

A—That has been my fundamental position for years. Underlying it is the idea that you don't become judges of the world. Differences in the world there have been, and will be. God is all-powerful. He appears with many shapes and faces. If we search, we may find as many religions as there are men. Hundreds of men are merely striving to know the Truth. They will put the Truth in their own way. No two men will put it in identical terms. No two men in this ashram would present the Truth in identical terms. Men would not put the Truth in identical terms with me. Though I know that God, the all-powerful, resides in every one of us, we are imperfect media. We are all different. No two bodies are identically the same. No two leaves of the tree are identically the same, there is bound to be some difference. Each one prays to God according to his own light. Who am I to judge and say that I pray better than you do? I don't judge the Muslims, Parsis, Christians and Jews. If I am a seeker of truth, it is quite sufficient for me. I cannot say that, because I have seen God in this way, the whole world must see Him in that way. All religions are true and equal. That, however, is not to say that they are equally true in religious terms or are absolutely true. Another man's religion is true for him as mine is for me. I can't be a judge of his religion. That is my fundamental position.

Q—What part did Jesus play in your life?

A—Jesus played a great part in my life—unconsciously how much, I do not know, consciously how much,

I do know When I began to read the Sermon on the Mount, I felt the beauty of it, though I am not able to say that it is singular or is not to be found in other religions But the presentation is unique and not to be found in any other faith In South Africa, at the instance of friends, I had to read a lot of Christian books I saw the beauties of Christianity So many of my words are chosen from the Bible In my talks I can't avoid reference to the Bible I won't be able to speak without referring to it

Q—How does the person of Jesus affect your life?

A—Not in any special sense I don't look upon Jesus as the only son of God Taken in a literal sense, the idea offends me In a literal sense God begets no son, or, if He begets at all, He begets not one son In a spiritual sense you can say so But in that sense we are all sons of God, if we want to make that claim Jesus was one of the prophets mankind has seen He is one of the teachers of the world I don't put him outside or above the other teachers I don't consider him a special favourite of God The person of Jesus is a living reality in this sense But if Jesus lives in this sense, so do other great souls in the world They affect us because they are still living Jesus thus is not living in a special sense of the word, distinguished from others

Q—Do you refer to the Krishna of history when generally you refer to him?

A—I don't speak of the Krishna of history I know Krishna not as a historical figure but as an embodiment of perfection This conception has revolutionized Hinduism How it acts is more than I can say, and nobody can explain it The spirit of Hinduism has evolved this idea Hinduism is still in the process of evolution In fact all religions are evolving Hinduism, if not Zoroastrianism, is of all living religions the oldest They are all undergoing evolution Krishna as an incarnation of God has transformed the lives of tens of thousands of men It is a patent, historical fact That transformation is going on

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE TOUR

even at present Similarly, you don't know the Jesus of history He exists in the pages of histories Gibbon and Fairer have given their own records about him Whom am I to believe? It is not Jesus of history who really rules over the lives of Christians, it is the Jesus of their own imagination who does so The God of my imagination rules my life, and not the God of your imagination Thousands of people believe not in the Krishna of my imagination but in the Krishna of their own imagination A time comes when the whole thing transcends reason Krishna has transformed the life of tens of thousands of men, and many instances of this transformation can be cited The same is true of other teachers of mankind

Q—What is your practical advice to us?

A—Weave that advice from the talk I have given you

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## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE TOUR

[Date 20-2-1934 Place Madras A talk with a press correspondent]

Q—What have been the achievements of your tour in Tamil Nad?

A—Two achievements stand out prominently In spite of hard times people have given freely, and, in spite of prognostications to the contrary, tens of thousands of people—including very large numbers of women—have flocked to meetings although they knew for what purpose the meetings were held

Q—How are the funds collected in the tour going to be used?

A—The Central Board is allowing 75 per cent of the funds collected in each province to the respective Provincial Boards, to be used for constructive schemes to be



both Gauri and her husband agreed. Later on, when Gandhiji went to her house, she parted with some of her jewellery.

There was another young woman who had given her gold bangles to Gandhiji. Her husband was also present. "You know," Gandhiji told him, "your wife has given her bangles to me. Has she done so with your consent?"

"Yes, with my consent." And he added, "It is her wish and pleasure. The ornaments belong to her. I have no power to refuse my consent."

"All husbands do not act so wisely as that. What is your age?"

"Thirty."

"At your age I did not act so wisely. Wisdom came to me later," said Gandhiji amidst hearty laughter from the hearers.

## SUSPENSION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

[Date 5-4-1934 Place Patna. On the 2nd of April Gandhiji wrote at Saharsa, a village in Bihar, a statement advising the restriction of civil disobedience to himself alone. At the same time, on 31st March and 1st April, some leaders met at Dr. Ansari's house in Delhi, and decided on reviving the Swaraj Party with a programme of council-going. It was decided, however, not to publish the resolution till Gandhiji had seen and approved of it. Dr. Ansari, Shri Bhulabhai Desai and Dr. Bidhan Roy were deputed to meet Gandhiji. The meeting took place at Patna on the night of the 4th. The two decisions were made quite independently of each other. After the leaders from Delhi talked to Gandhiji about their own mission, the latter read to them his own statement which took them by surprise. Gandhiji told them how he had arrived at the decision, and explained its spiritual significance. They all

## SUSPENSION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

welcomed the decision, but Dr Ansari raised some objections against the reasons adduced by Gandhiji for the decision. Dr Ansari and Shri Bhulabhai Desai met him again on the morning of the 5th. The following conversation then took place\*]

Ansari—My apprehensions have been removed by a talk with Bhulabhai last night after we left you. The statement may now be released. You have explained things as a specialist would explain.

Bhulabhai—There are some basic principles which it is no use arguing about. When the statement is looked at from a critical point of view, it seems quite clear.

Gandhiji—I want you to think of it in another light also. This is my claim for spiritual matters that they are also practical. I put it to Jayaprakash, and he had no difficulty in admitting that it was most practical. We have a number of young men going to jail in excitement because of a resolution of the Congress. The idea underlying the Poona resolution was that those alone should go who were convinced that they should go. You will find day after day the number of jail-goers decreasing instead of increasing. The best of them are fatigued. In the conception of individual civil disobedience there is no room for fatigue, as soon as you come out, you must go in again. Now by this new decision one general covers the rest. That is a practical step, though I have not

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\*The following is the operative part of the statement which, written at Saharsa on April 2nd, was released to the press on April 7th.

'The introspection prompted by the conversation with the ashram inmates has led me to the conclusion that I must advise all Congressmen to suspend civil resistance for Swaraj as distinguished from specific grievances. They should leave it to me alone. It should be resumed by others in my lifetime only under my direction unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence. I give this opinion as the author and initiator of satyagraha. Henceforth, therefore, all who have been impelled to civil resistance for Swaraj under my advice directly given or indirectly inferred will please desist from civil resistance. I am quite convinced that this is the best course in the interest of India's fight for freedom.'

arrived at it in that way If I die in jail, then you will have to consider the situation again Today I say that no one shall offer civil resistance except under my direction in my lifetime Till then they may carry on constructive activities In South Africa people knew nothing as to what would happen till within six weeks the thing finally burst out In a little country with a population of 150 thousands, it took six solid years to start the thing In a vast country like this where there are so many forces unknown to you, the preparation might take a longer time Moreover, if I think from a purely material or political point of view, then I take the Government also Individual civil resistance was to rely not on numbers but on quality But the issue of Swaraj would be decided by civil resistance Therefore the Government got frightened There was no idea in the Poona resolution to give them fright There was nothing in the resolution to make them frightened, as there would be, say, in mass civil disobedience Jawaharlal said 'I see no difference between mass and individual civil disobedience' I had to say 'There is a sharp difference between the two I see the impracticability of mass civil disobedience in the present circumstances' In view of your resolution passed at Delhi, this decision releases the energy of so many I read my statement thrice in the light of what you said last night

Ansari—From the practical, political point of view it is more than enough

G—Further, more than this the Congress should not go It would be national suicide As for the conclusion which you have arrived at (re council entry), I would say that the Government ought to allow it to go on even if the Congress must remain illegal Council entry today is not the Congress policy There are two parties in the Congress—one party is developing the civil resistance spirit The second party is the Parliamentary Party There is a third party also

Bhulabhai—Three classes I distinctly realize I read

your statement once again after I left Dr Ansari after midnight

Ansari (to Shri Bhulabhai)—I read it ten times after you left me!

G—I want all sections to work in all directions towards one thing in their own ways without criticising one another. This statement is based on my unquenchable faith in civil resistance. In the interval that they have got, the civil resisters will be qualifying themselves and making themselves fitter for civil resistance. All irksome life of the prison they will carry in their own person.

Bhulabhai—And at the same time they will be doing some national service.

G—Now I have to show in what ways we may be offering satyagraha in social, domestic and political life, or for the redress of local grievances. Lord Reading said 'We can understand their fighting for a definite issue. But they want to usurp the power of the Government!' Satyagraha for things I have just mentioned is not debarred in the statement which only says that no one except me can offer satyagraha in terms of the Congress resolution *for attaining Swaraj*.

Rajendraprasad—What will be the effect of this decision on the opponents?

G—If we can keep ourselves in good conditions, the effect on the opponents will be good. I have said in the statement that we have not touched the hearts of the governors. We said that we offered satyagraha in order to embarrass the Government. That should not have been the motive. Again, we have not touched the hearts of the terrorists, because we have not felt the spiritual power of satyagraha. We have only thought of political power. It was not the pure type of satyagraha that we offered. It was always adulterated. Every act of satyagraha of course has its results. The political results of the movement have been grand, but not the spiritual results, because spiritual satyagraha has not been offered.

in the full sense of the term. The word 'may' (in the sentence 'It *may* be that the comparatively pure and perfect satyagraha by me alone will touch them') refers to my own imperfection and not to the claim of satyagraha. My satyagraha has to be absolutely free of anger. I have no anger against a single Englishman. When I framed the Congress Committee's report on the atrocities in the Punjab, I had a battle royal with Das and Har-kishanlal. The pure satyagraha of one man is sufficient to attain the whole object. But I don't claim perfection. If you approach civil resistance with the purest motive, the action *may* fail, but if the motive is impure, the action *must* fail. There is nothing intricate in this. Its difficulty I have never denied. It is like walking on the edge of a sword. Difficult it is, intricate it never is. Even a child can practise it. But a child cannot handle a revolver. I see no danger in continuing the type of satyagraha we have been carrying on, but I do see the folly of it (Bhulabhai—waste). If there was danger, I would have used a different language altogether. I would have then given publicity to it at once. A general is profligate, incompetent, lazy who fritters away his soldiers instead of conserving them and making them better equipped. This decision is like restraining a driver from moving an engine till there is sufficient steam in it. In our case more steam is to be generated. It is like brahmacharya where energy is conserved. If there is waste of energy before it is time, there is no other result than debility which we see coming over so many. Take the case of Kanti and other boys. They have been the bravest of satyagrahis. But they are now tired. They have all taken satyagraha pledges. They have read books, and behaved in a fine manner. But they have still greater ambition, therefore they won't go to jail again. They have till now gone without a murmur. They simply enforced my orders. I should deplore the loss of all these boys.

[The talk then turned to the Delhi decision, and a reference was made to the so-called Communal Award.]

## A TERRIBLE DEVASTATION

G—Personally I would accept the 'Communal Award' if I can get Muslims to go whole-heartedly with us in the national demand. But there too I have a doubt. In London I made this offer to them. Next day I found that they were not nationalists. In London they did not agree to support the national demand, though Mr Jamal Mahomed and Sir Mirza Ismail made an effort in that direction. I said 'Let Mr Jinnah come to a gentlemen's agreement. I don't press for joint electorates. I am prepared to swallow separate electorates and to give weight-age. But you must support the national demand.' I said 'Take the pen and write out your demand, and I sign the document. Only Dī Ansari must be one of you.'

Referring to Sir Samuel Hoare, the then Secretary of State for India, Gandhiji said—Hoare is a hard nut to crack. He has a strong will. He won't budge an inch from his position. You can't get anything from him. He is not, like Birkenhead, easy-going. He has a faith in the mission of England for the whole world.

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## A TERRIBLE DEVASTATION

[Date 5-4-1934 Place Patna A talk with a press correspondent about the Bihar earthquake.]

Gandhiji—Although I have been credited with very vivid imagination, and although having known fair Bihar intimately I had a good mental picture of the havoc caused by the earthquake, the reality went far beyond the imaginary picture I had formed from the descriptions received from Rajendrababu. Although he is a word painter, he had failed to convey to me an adequate impression of the ruin that has overtaken Bihar. I have now covered almost all the area of destruction barring Purnea. Practically everywhere growing scarcity of water, a real

danger of famine, rich fields covered with sands, rows upon rows of houses in towns and villages utterly destroyed, water and sand breaking into stone or cement floors, bearing walls and pillars to the ground, palaces a heap of bricks, solitary walls or pillars standing as a mournful reminder of the glory that was, people living in improvised huts every moment in danger of catching fire, many old sites not being capable of being built upon for fear of their subsidence during the rains, cattle starving for want of fodder and in some instances dying for want of water. Add to this the very real danger of floods reaching areas hitherto untouched by them. Middle classes have been perhaps the hardest hit. Some of them have lost their all and are reduced to begging.

A combined effort of the Government and the Central Relief Committee, assisted by other organizations, will fail to give anything like full relief to the middle class men. The twenty lakhs subscribed to the Central Relief Committee and nearly forty lakhs to the Viceroy's Fund are utterly inadequate for the minimum requirements. I hope, therefore, that the public will realize the immensity of the task before the Government and the people, and will not in any way relax their effort to send their donations as liberally as they can to the Central Relief Committee. I am unable to say how many lakhs will be required to ensure just sufficient supply of water for the thirsty men and cattle, let alone a supply of clothing, food, medical necessities, and housing accommodation, temporary or semi-temporary. Reclamation of the devastated fields I have omitted altogether from mention.

The Government are engaged in conducting a survey of the devastated fields. They have issued elaborate instructions to the peasantry how they can renovate their fields for the approaching monsoons. The latest estimate made by the Government of the area under earthquake sands is over 500,000 acres. The average cost of reclaiming an acre is at the lowest estimate calculated

## MORE ABOUT THE SUSPENSION

at Rs 20 per acre That means Rs one crore What relief it will be possible to give to the owners of these fields is more than I can say at present But I think I have given what is undoubtedly an underestimate of the help that the one and a half crores of people living in the affected area requires Needless to say, all these are not equally affected Some have escaped direct loss altogether Not one has escaped the indirect effect of the devastation

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## MORE ABOUT THE SUSPENSION

[Date 7-4-1934 Place Patna A talk with a press correspondent]

Q—Your statement is too brief for the general reader People are likely to say that you have deserted your fellow-prisoners

A—I knew that I kept myself open to such a charge when I deliberately decided to omit all reference to them, for my decision had nothing to do with securing the release of prisoners A civil resister does not march to prison in order to get out of it the next day They will come out in their own good time My one and only aim in taking this decision was to puige the movement of the possibility of decay Such a possibility must always be there when an imperfect man handles imperfect instruments I therefore felt that the time had come for me to reduce the possibility of decay to the minimum, and that could only be secured if civil resistance was confined to one person only and that one being the most versed in the science In my opinion the decision will make the movement stronger than before and capable of being easily handled both by the people and the Government Hence the possibility of an early discharge of prisoners



is really greater than before, especially if the Government believe in the sincerity of my decision

Q—Since you have confined civil resistance to yourself, why not go the whole hog and suspend it altogether?

A—That is undoubtedly a very proper question. All I can say in answer is that as the author of satyagraha and as a staunch believer in its efficacy I may not suspend it in my own person except for circumstances which will discredit the movement itself, as for instance, violence by satyagrahis themselves

Q—Has your decision been prompted by the Delhi resolutions?

A—Not in the slightest degree. It was coming definitely on Easter Monday at Saharsa. I had no knowledge that the Delhi Conference had finished its deliberations, and that it had come to a definite conclusion. I came to know on Tuesday that the Delhi Conference had finished its deliberations. What is more, the decision had come to me vaguely some days before it was finally taken, when I knew nothing of the Delhi proposals. Therefore in point of time and fact my decision to confine civil resistance only to me has no connection whatsoever with the Delhi Conference resolutions. Long before the Delhi resolutions took concrete form I had said in conversations and in letters to friends that it was the duty of Congressmen who believed in council entry and could not and would not offer civil resistance, to form a party and prosecute the council entry programme. Thus and only thus, in my opinion, could the situation be clarified and paralysis of Congressmen removed. Indeed, even when the Poona Conference was meeting I had suggested to Messrs Asaf Ali and Satyamurti that, if they believed in the council programme, they should follow it and canvass public opinion in its favour. The decision about civil resistance is wholly based on ethical grounds, and so far as I know myself, has no connection whatsoever with external circumstances. I may also tell you that in the statement as it was drafted on Easter Monday there was a paragraph

## WHY 'HARIJAN'?

regarding council entry for those who would not take up the constructive activities mentioned in my statement I removed that paragraph because I had, before the statement was given to the Press, seen the Delhi friends and given them the letter that is already before the public

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## WHY 'HARIJAN'?

[Date 13-4-1934 Place Gauhati A talk with Harijan leaders of Assam]

Q—Why do you use the word 'Harijan' in respect of us? Why not call us 'Haribhakta'?

A—'Harijan' and 'Haribhakta' are absolutely the same. Tulsidas always uses the word 'jan' in the sense of 'bhakta'. I have given reasons for using the word 'Harijan'. God is the help of the helpless. The chosen of God are not the rich but the poor, the most persecuted. If we go to the Bible, it was said of poor Lazarus that in his lifetime he received evil things but after his death he was comforted. Of the rich man it was said 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God'. The rich man could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but Lazarus could. After all, all India has to accept the word 'Harijan'. If you don't like it, don't use it. It was given to me by a Harijan. There are monstrous castes among the so-called untouchables. They are like castes among slaves, some of whom wear iron chains and some gilded ones.

Q—We failed to convince our people.

A—What you and I may fail to convince, Time will convince. Time is the Father of us all.

Q—Will you please impress on Harijan communities

to be united? Namasudras have got separate representation

A—I have been the guest of Namasudras during my Bengal tour. They have given me boats. I have said that a time will come when we shall all call ourselves Harijans. That time is coming much faster than we imagine.

Q—The untouchability in Assam is much less than in other parts of the country, e.g. in respect of water, temple entry, touch of Caste Hindus, etc.

A—I said, on entering the threshold of Assam, that you were on a wrong track. No matter what the degree of untouchability, so long as there is untouchability, you will feel like the unseen and unseeable of Malabar, because you will know where the shoe pinches. The feeling will be the same. Even if you can touch water, you will not have something else, and you will feel for it as acutely as un-visibility. Indeed you will feel more than the Pulayas. That there is no unapproachability and unseeability in Assam makes no difference to me. The feeling will be the same. The evil of untouchability is to be gauged by the feeling of those who are considered untouchables. They are red with rage. Namasudra boys cannot drink water with others. This is as bad for them as unseeability.

A lady doctor—The Government consider them depressed classes, whereas they don't like to be considered depressed.

Gandhiji—I don't like anybody to call himself or herself depressed in order to be served by the Harijan Sevak Sangh or the Government. We are going to be one presently. If those who are classified today as depressed wish to be de-classified, so much the better.

Q—When Hindus become one will they all be called 'depressed' or 'Savarna'?

A—The name 'Avarna' will disappear. They may call themselves 'depressed', if they like. Those among you who can get absorbed into the Savarna Hindus, may

## RECEPTIONS RULED OUT

do so Or they may be considered 'depressed', if they choose to do so But there is no doubt that all are going to be one Otherwise the Hindus as a community will disappear I would ask all Hindus to call themselves 'depressed' Let the Government consider as depressed as many Hindus as they like The main thing is that the spirit of high and low must disappear from our minds

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## RECEPTIONS RULED OUT

[Date 13-4-1934 Place Gauhati A talk with Harijan workers]

Gandhiji—If you are really attached to this cause, you should see to it that out of the money spent on the receptions of myself and my party not a pie is debited to the purse The money collected is for welfare work, and not for administration Shri Birla feels more than myself that not a pie should go out of the welfare work When I see that for welcome addresses, motor journeys and feeding me and my party the money is taken from the purse, I feel hurt I therefore sent two men in advance to lay down the law in this respect We don't want to be fed I don't come here to be fed In the first instance, I depend on God, and, in the second instance, I draw upon friends I shall have private cars, and shall have private hospitality Otherwise we shall buy food and cook it

Q—There are some who say that the money paid by the people is not for the Harijan cause but because of your past services

A—That is wrong When I say I go on the Harijan tour exclusively, I shall be received by Mehetars If others join, they may I am not on view for others My

past services have gone, and I have got my reward for them. In *Harijan*, I have gone at all workers, and have said 'Don't go in for these expenses at all'. If others want to have a peep at me, they must pay for it, otherwise I shall not be received by others. I refused a purse of Rs 100 from a kirtan mandir. They asked me to go into the mandir and attend the kirtan. I said 'If the mandir debar Harijans, I will not come in'. One pie is worth its weight in gold, if the pie is given as penance for injustice done to Harijans. Crores of rupees otherwise given are of no earthly use. I want to convert the Savarna Hindus. I carry the Savarna Hindu honour on my shoulders. I won't let that honour go for a mess of pottage. Otherwise I shall be in a fool's paradise. I have had enough of it. I have got out of the fool's paradise. As soon as I see real penance on the part of Caste Hindus, as a humble searcher of truth I dance with joy. You don't see me as a political worker today. My bread should be found from those who believe in the sinfulness of untouchability and from no others. The receptions should only be on the part of those who don't believe in untouchability. The money has been given in thousands of coppers. Shall I still say that they have given me money because of my political services in spite of their belief in untouchability? An honoured guest should be entertained on his own terms. If you put the choicest wines and meats on my table, it will be like the story of the cat and the crane, the poor crane could not even wet his beak!

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## MORE ABOUT COUNCIL ENTRY

[Date 2-5-1934 Place Ranchi Shri C Rajagopalachari, Babu Rajendraprasad, Shri Jarnalal Bajaj, and Shri Mathuradas

Tricumji participated in this conversation ]

Gandhujī (to C R)—(Referring to the decision re civil disobedience) I don't feel the difficulty, I don't feel paralysis I don't feel any difficulty in practising civil disobedience on the widest scale possible But I must manage it in my own way The passengers of a ship can't say to the captain 'You go this way' It is not as if I am mystifying Everybody says 'I am ready for suffering' That is not the point The point is whether you are fit for suffering We may have to wander in the wilderness and make preparations Instead of sporadic action of individuals, civil disobedience has now to be concentrated in one man As for other political work, there will be all kinds of methods We are not wedded to one method

Mathuradas—How will it work up?

G—It will work up in a way you outside will shape it I shall be in prison

C R—At the end of the year on August 4, you are free to act politically, you are not bound to offer civil resistance

G—I shall act politically I will offer civil resistance, but in my own way, not by knocking against the first policeman I come across I want to act as a civil resister should It is wrong to say that he is pining to go to jail But he might act in a way which no authority would tolerate He has to observe non-violence in thought, word and deed He has to be courteous He won't go and occupy a magisterial chair I, for instance, would say that I am going to Rās<sup>1</sup> The Government would say 'You have no right to do so' Or suppose I should wish to go to Bengal I would then say 'I wish to meet the people and not to instigate them to commit violence'

Bajaj—You would court imprisonment only if they don't tolerate your action, is it not?

1 A village in the Kheda District in Gujarat, famous for its lead in the no tax campaign in 1930-31 and 1932-34

G—Yes

C R—Not that he would do certain things because the Government won't tolerate them, but because they are necessary

G—They won't tolerate these acts because they would be against their ordinances. If Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdul Gaffar Khan are released, I won't offer civil disobedience. It is too good a thing to be true. But such things have happened in my life. I think they will be discharged. The Government may not discharge Abdul Gaffar Khan because they won't trust him. They won't withdraw ordinances. They won't relax repression. But civil resistance prisoners will be released.

C R—In the statement of the Home Member Jawaharlal and Abdul Gaffar Khan have been referred to

G—Their cases are different. Jawaharlal has been imprisoned for breach of ordinary law, Abdul Gaffar Khan for an indefinite period.

Rajendraprasad—The Home Member has referred to those who have been imprisoned during the course of civil disobedience. Abdul Gaffar Khan and Jawaharlal seem to have been deliberately referred to.

G (to C R)—Do you want the Working Committee to control the Parliamentarians?

C R—There must be control.

G—The question is whether the group should be known by the name 'the Swaraj Party' or 'the Parliamentary Party'. It may be, like the AISA, a body under the Congress but autonomous.

C R—Overhead control there should be.

G—I don't contemplate it. If we see the Parliamentary Party going against Congress principles, we may disown them, as they can disown us. The AICC contains all sorts of men. The AICC does not claim to be an expert body but will create an expert body. The Congress may carry on a raging campaign of civil disobedience. The Congress will then be declared illegal,

## MORE ABOUT COUNCIL ENTRY

but not this Parliamentary Party

C R —They won't have the Swaraj Party in every village Congress committees will help them Therefore control is necessary

G —Control is necessary when we distrust them

Rajendraprasad—Is it open to us to call on them to withdraw from councils?

G —It is, but I don't want it to be open The parliamentary mentality has come to stay in the country The Congress may disown them, denounce them, but may not recall them It may disaffiliate them, but may not control them

C R —Shall we not attempt to lay down general lines of policy for them—in regard to the policy to be followed about the Temple Entry Bill, for instance?

G —The A I C C will develop its policy from time to time, and the Parliamentary Party will follow it But we should frame no hard and fast constitution for them Let them evolve their own constitution

C R —Control in day-to-day policy is necessary

G —I am not inclined to use the word 'control'

C R —As a party constituted to carry out the Congress policy, they will be expected to follow certain lines of policy, isn't it?

G —The Party should consist only of Congressmen Instead of disowning that body—for it will be too powerful—we may disaffiliate it, if the occasion arises for such a step There are not two mentalities There is only one mentality If they become a rebellious body, it is up to us to disaffiliate it

Bajaj—Shall we give them no mandate?

G —You, Rajaji and Rajendrababu don't even think of entering the councils If you find that those who go there give themselves up to a life of pleasure and thus degrade the Congress, you will disaffiliate them I wish the Party to be a disciplined body I don't wish all its members to go to the councils

Rajendrababu—In fact they join the Party just to go



to the councils

G—But they won't prohibit others from not going in Take Di Ansari for instance Why do you say 'they'? We are they, and they are we That is how I conceive it

C R—A revolting party is a danger

G—I don't want the Parliamentary Party to consist only of council-goers, but of all those who are parliamentary-minded I can't join it, because my one foot is in jail

C R—Your contact is necessary to counterbalance any possible corruption Some manner of control must be evolved Control must be greater than in the past

G—But not by membership, you mean to say? I contemplate even membership

C R—You must be a patron of the Party Or they must draft a resolution saying 'Whereas Mahatma Gandhi advised the formation of the Swaraj Party'

Bajaj—That is to say, the Swaraj Party is the child of Mahatma Gandhi!

G—The Swaraj Party may consist also of those who have parliamentary talents They may remain behind We must not think in terms of 'they' and 'we'

C R—If you call them the Parliamentary Party of the Congress, won't there be 'they' and 'we'?

G—What I mean to say is that the composition of the Party should not be only of those who want to go into the councils but of others also (To Babu Rajendraprasad) You will form a Parliamentary Party in Bihar In it men like Lakshmi Babu<sup>2</sup> won't find a place

Rajendraprasad—I look at this matter from the point of view of success The Party won't succeed if it does not have the support of the entire Congress

G—Then you must give that support Form a Parliamentary Party in Bihar, the control of which may be in our hands

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2 Secretary of the Bihar Branch of the Spinners' Association.

## NOT SUSPENSION, BUT RESTRICTION

[Date 2-5-1934 Place Ranchi The following leaders, besides Gandhiji, participated in the discussion Dr Ansari, Shri C Rajagopalachari, Babu Rajendraprasad, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Dr B C Roy, Messrs Bhulabhai Desai, Jamnalal Bajaj, K M Munshi, Asaf Ali, Deep Narayan Singh, and Mathuradas Tricumji ]

G—Sarojini Devi told me that it was generally understood that I had advised the complete suspension of civil disobedience on the part of the Congress Then I would say it is not so If this is the interpretation put upon my statement, it is the imperfection of my language, but this is not what I have sought to convey Ansari, Bhulabhai and Bidhan know what is at the back of my mind

Bhulabhai—They don't mean to say that this is what the statement conveys, but that this is what it ought to be

G—Sarojini Devi said that the interpretation put upon my statement in Bombay was that there would be a suspension of civil disobedience on behalf of the Congress, and that my civil disobedience would be quite individual It is not so

Bhulabhai—The wish is father to the thought Many people read into it that meaning The two conceptions are quite distinct They read that meaning in hope Please see if it may be possible to remove the wrong impression by another statement

G—Is it the impression also among those that are here? Is it your desire that the Congress should wash its hands of civil disobedience as restricted to me?

Bhulabhai—Will you offer it in the name of the Congress?

G—Yes

C R—Is the Congress going to disown him?

## CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

Bhulabhai—There is a third, middle course. It may be possible to persuade Gandhiji not to treat it as the Congress disowning him but as his releasing the Congress from it.

G—It would be possible, if it was my advice that civil disobedience should be undertaken by me not on behalf of the Congress but on my own account.

Bhulabhai—It may be possible to put it to Gandhiji as the Congress' desire. 'Will you relieve us? We are unable to bear the burden.'

Asaf Ali—I have understood your statement to mean that you have relieved Congressmen, and, since you say that civil disobedience should be according to your own conception, you have confined it to yourself. The Congress has faith in civil disobedience, but we can't say so about the modification of it.

G—Under these circumstances the Congress should free itself altogether from this.

Asaf Ali—Civil disobedience must remain in our armoury. But the present is not the time to use it, nor does it seem likely to come in the near future. You should, therefore, not use that weapon now.

Deep Narayan Singh—The Congress would wish not to reject but suspend it.

G—I will explain later why I have given this advice. But what I wish to know just now is whether my language is capable of bearing the interpretation I am now putting on it.

Deep Narayan Singh—We have taken it to mean complete suspension of civil disobedience.

G.—If the people have interpreted it in this way, it would be a different matter altogether. A sense of relief there is, because they have come to know that they have no longer to offer civil disobedience. 'He will go to prison. It is enough if one man goes to jail on our behalf,'—if the sense of relief is due to this feeling, it is one thing. But it would be quite a different thing if the sense

of relief is due to the feeling 'He will go on offering it himself, but we are freed from it' After Sarojini Devi spoke to me I asked myself if there was anything in my statement to justify this interpretation I read the statement once again at three o'clock last night I have nowhere said in it that the Congress should suspend civil resistance In fact I have assumed that the Congress is not prepared for complete suspension In Poona it was definitely against it If Congressmen wish to get out of it altogether, I must respect their wish, and you may disown me It would, in my opinion, be detrimental to the Congress prestige I said so at Poona also If there is violence and it goes on increasing, we can suspend civil disobedience, but we cannot suspend it because our number is small We should carry on civil disobedience, even if there is one satyagrahi left If the adviser says 'I have nothing left now and even I am unable to offer civil disobedience,' then we can do something else But I don't feel that I cannot offer civil disobedience I feel no despondency in me I do feel that it can be still more powerful in certain circumstances One of them is that civil disobedience is confined to me I want to do this as the Congress expert on this subject The Congress is responsible for civil disobedience But finally I am responsible I am not feeling helpless I can't suspend it in my own person Nor can the Congress The Congress dare not suspend it The Congress must not suspend it, because thousands of persons have ruined themselves in this struggle What answer shall we give to them? And what reward? Do you fear that the Congress will still be illegal? But there is something much more powerful

Deep Narayan Singh—They won't like to disown you, and yet they want to suspend this civil disobedience for a time

G—You can't have both the things together If Congressmen have that desire and yet do not want to disown me, I may withdraw from the Congress There are two instances of a similar nature I might have be-

come a member of the Servants of India Society. But it came to votes, and I withdrew. I said 'I don't want to divide the house'. The second instance refers to the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad. Some people wanted to elect me as the President of the Parishad in 1926, and there was a controversy over the proposal. Munshi brought the matter to me. I said 'I don't want to enter any rivalry. It is unthinkable.'

Bhulabhai—The Government did not put the two propositions together, it was the newspapers that did so.

Munshi—My impression is that they want the A I C C to do nothing more than endorsing Gandhiji's statement. If you don't do so, it will be a vote of censure, whether you wish it or not. The whole world will understand it in that way.

G—There are some Congressmen who want to go further. I have, in my statement, advised the Congress to restrict civil disobedience to me. Now the suggestion is that I should practise it in my own person but not in the name of the Congress. If that is the desire of the bulk of the Congressmen, I would give that advice, without dividing the A I C C on the question.

Bhulabhai—That is precisely what I want to say.

G—I want to know two things. (1) Whether I am misunderstood, (2) Whether it is the desire of the bulk of the Congressmen that I should go further than this.

Bhulabhai—If the word 'effectively' means endorsing your statement, Congressmen would be too glad.

C R—'Effective' means something more.

G—It is quite likely that the Government may say this is not enough.

C R—They had a doubt as to whether a majority of Congressmen would accept the advice. Let us only think whether we want to disown Gandhiji.

G—They don't want to disown me. They want this accommodation from me. If that is so, I must give them that accommodation. If there is such a desire on the part of a majority of Congressmen, I must do so.

C R—Does it not mean that they don't want civil disobedience at all?

G—No, I won't go so far as to say that. An honest man would say 'I can't understand one man doing it. If you have invincible faith, you may do it. If you show results, we shall come to it.' That many can't understand it I can see. But my hope is that many don't have that feeling. Having seen brilliant results, they would say 'We can't possibly give it up.' If I give up civil disobedience, I would be denying myself. There are some Congressmen who wish to tell me 'You should not isolate yourself from the nation, and therefore you too should give up civil disobedience.' The U P Congressmen have said this.

(A discussion about the meaning of the U P Congressmen's resolution followed. D1 Ansari and Shri Bhulabhai Desai said that the resolution did not bear the interpretation that Gandhiji put upon it. The text of the resolution was read, but the difference of opinion about the interpretation persisted.)

Ansari—They prohibit you just now, but say 'When you go forward, take us with you.'

(Shri Bhulabhai Desai and Shrimati Sarojini Devi supported this interpretation.)

Bajaj—In any case he is not going to jail just now—at least not till August.

G—The resolution in effect means to say 'Your advice is good. But you should go a step further and suspend civil disobedience completely. When in future we go that way, we will all go together.' (To Shrimati Sarojini Devi) Grannie, you were right about those two women, and I was staggered.

## II

[The discussion continued in the afternoon, with the addition of Shri K. F. Nariman among the participants.]

Bidhan Roy—What is the difficulty in having the

Working Committee meeting here and then in Patna?

G—I have been in this matter nothing but a post office. To have the Working Committee here and in Patna would be to bring them twice. Even if one man says 'I can't come,' we can't have it. After all, the Working Committee could have met informally. I felt that many members of the Working Committee would be here. I thought Dr Mahmud would be here. But he is not.

Bidhan—Mahmud has fever. He wants me to let him know by wire what is to be done. I would have the other aspect of the matter touched also. The question is whatever the alterations in the programme laid down in the 1932 resolution, are the findings of the Working Committee necessary or not? Because the Working Committee laid down the programme, and the Working Committee would modify it.

G—The Working Committee's decision won't be announced. Last time the A I C C had met, and then the Working Committee met. Now the Working Committee is to meet just before the A I C C. There have been so many changes that in reality we don't know whether the A I C C will look in the same way as the Working Committee. My feeling is that the Working Committee without Vallabhbhai and Jawaharlal won't be of much value. The suggestion to call a special session of the Congress does not appeal to me at this juncture. The A I C C has all the powers of the Congress. There is no question of emergency. Let there be an ordinary session of the Congress. If the Congress begins to function normally, you will have a normal session of the Congress. The A I C C will say 'Pending confirmation by the Congress this is the policy.' There is an emergency in this sense that all limbs of the country have still to be working.

Bidhan—Do you think that the Working Committee does not have the power of modifying its programme of 1932?

G—I don't say that. But having called a meeting of the A I C C, you can't publish the resolution of the

Working Committee before the A I C C meets

Bidhan—There is the other view that the Working Committee is competent to alter the resolution of the Working Committee of 1932 working as the authority of the Congress

G—As the mouthpiece of the Congress it has the authority But when the A I C C is imminent, we can't publish its resolution I want to make this clear If you hearken back to the para dropped from my statement, we don't want to be dancing attendance on the Government I thought that para utterly useless after that letter to Dr Ansari

Bidhan—Your position you will put before the Working Committee We have had no difficulty in understanding your statement

Nariman—The country has taken civil disobedience as called off

G—Is there any sentence in my statement to warrant that interpretation?

Nariman—We of course interpret it correctly But the country wants to put upon it a construction that it wants It takes that everything is over The general construction is this

Bhulabhai—In general discussions in Bombay it was said that this was not adequate

G—Do you mean to say that all other provinces put that interpretation?

Nariman—Yes

G—That is not to my knowledge I was startled when for the first time last night Mrs Naidu told me that

Nariman—The Working Committee resolution was rescinded by the Poona meeting What is the objection to putting on record now a resolution of the Working Committee rescinding the 1932 resolution?

G—There is the strongest objection The Working Committee's resolution of 1932 can't be rescinded like that

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\* Re Council entry



Nariman—What is the objection to the Working Committee's resolution being published subject to endorsement by the A I C C ?

G—Because the A I C C meeting will be held just that day or the next. The Working Committee never published its resolutions like that.

Bidhan—He means to say that the A I C C may be postponed to a later date when you go to Bombay.

Nariman—At the time of the plenary session.

G—We can't put off the A I C C like that.

Bidhan—One advantage in doing so is that, if the Government make Congress bodies legal, the A I C C will know what directions to give for work.

G—We know the position of the Government now. The Government won't put an obstacle in the way of the meeting of the Working Committee, the A I C C or the Congress for ratifying the statement.

Bidhan—It would be better if you put the A I C C in a better position to give consideration to future work. If you hold it earlier, it will not be in a position to know correctly what instructions to give regarding work in the near future.

G—I agree.

Bidhan—Give the A I C C ten or fifteen days after the resolution of the Working Committee, to think over.

[Here Shri Rajaji, Shri T. C. Goswami and Raja Devendranath Khan of Narajole came in. Shri Bhulabhai Desai read the answers given by the Home Member in the Central Legislative Assembly.]

Nariman—Does it not mean that according to them your statement means withdrawal?

G—According to the Government it is enough. The Government deliberately use equivocal language.

Bidhan—Have the Working Committee meeting a little time before the A I C C.

G—It is a most precarious position. I would suggest the A I C C meeting at the same time as the Working Committee. Let the A I C C and the Working Com-

mittee both meet at Patna The A I C C will say 'The A I C C endorses the advice given by the Working Committee'

Bidhan—Are you not going to wait for what the Government do?

G—No I take up just now an attitude of surrender. Suppose we are not going to offer civil resistance by meeting in spite of the Government ban. You can either say we are not meeting. Or you must have the confidence that the Government are not going to interfere. They may lift the ban simultaneously. Or they may say that a formal lifting of the ban is not necessary. Dr Choithram was the first to say that civil disobedience must be withdrawn. On the strength of that statement he said to the magistrate that he was not offering civil disobedience, and he declared his disbelief in civil disobedience. The magistrate said 'You must formally apply'. This Dr Choithram refused to do, and he resisted. And he is in jail today though he is a confirmed non-resister. The magistrate was technically right in saying 'We can't take notice of the statements of public men'. I say to these workers from Gujarat 'Please don't put a construction on my statement which it does not bear and descend from high heaven to hell. You as workers and fighters should not ask people to apply to the Government, or express regret, and ask back their lands. Let everybody find his own level. But you shan't do that. My belief is that the Government won't interfere with the A I C C. If they do, either the Congress organization won't function, or they will apply to the Government.'

Nariman—Let us rescind the 1932 resolution of the Working Committee and say that the present decision means the calling off of civil disobedience.

G—Will you go to the Government after rescinding the C D resolution?

Nariman—No.

G—The Government consider sufficient a ratification of my statement. We did discuss this aspect of the

question before you arrived. The Poona resolution did not rescind the Working Committee's C D resolution of 1932. It is not rescinded even now. At Poona the President, Mr. Aney, said that mass civil disobedience was being converted to individual civil disobedience. Now we are saying that individual civil disobedience is restricted to one person. This is modification, no rescinding. So long as there is a semblance of resistance, it is not rescinding (or recission). I have no doubt about it. I had no doubt even then. Mr. Aney was within his rights constitutionally in saying that.

Nariman—Can one man represent the whole Congress in offering civil disobedience?

G—I have no doubt about it.

Nariman—Constitutionally he can. But I mean, from the point of view of tactics?

G—Just as I was the sole representative of the Congress in London. I say, let me try.

Nariman—What is our political objective?

G—Swaraj.

Nariman—Is Swaraj going to be attained by this (i.e. by the civil disobedience by Gandhiji alone)?

G—Yes. I expect that from this we shall be able to call on the whole nation again. I can imagine the country responding and co-operating with me.

Nariman—What will the Congress do after you go to jail?

G—Carry on the constructive programme.

Nariman—If the Government will allow the Congress to function.

G—Let us assume that they will allow. Let us assume both things. (1) The Government don't interfere and I go to jail, and the Congress functions and works out the constructive programme, (2) they don't lift the ban and I go to jail. In the latter case you may, if you like, go a step further and dissociate yourselves from me. But I don't go to jail for three months at least (i.e. before the 4th of August). The resolution will be passed by the

A I C C on 17th May, and probably the Congress will begin to function

Nariman—Then there is no difficulty

G—But if they don't lift the ban, and if the country wants to give up civil disobedience, you may pass a resolution and give it up This process can't go on up to August If the ban is there, it is there Then there is a blind alley, and then you will know what you have to do It will be done in my presence You may take that step now, or you may feel your way That means you will shape your policy according to what the Government will say or do The idea never crossed my mind as to what the Government would say or do, as I drafted my statement I only considered whether I am true to myself and to my country Let us do what we want to If they don't lift the ban, we shall meet in defiance of the ban My advice then will be Fight to the finish If they object to the resistance of even one man, and if they object to the A I C C meeting even to endorse my statement, it cannot be tolerated But my own feeling is that, if we honestly mean all that I say, they won't keep the ban They know that keeping the ban will be more irritant than necessary No Government in the world would apply irritants more than necessary But there may be mental reservation on your part in many ways If you run the Congress organization not to carry on constructive work—for my conception is either constructive work, or council work—, then it is much better that the Working Committee or the A I C C should denounce me I would be wholly with Nariman, if he said that there should be no laboratory or seminary within the Congress If a large number of people in the minority don't agree with me, they should dissociate themselves from me I won't then act up to that majority as I did not at Ahmedabad in 1924 This question then need not be submitted to the plenary session of the Congress, because I don't want to have my pound of flesh

Bidhan—If the Congress resolution prohibited you

from offering civil disobedience, what would you do?

G—Then I would tender my resignation. If, say, I can't exercise my individual right, I shall even cease to be a four-anna member. Freedom of conscience is always there. I would be committing a breach of discipline, if the Congress resolution prohibits anyone from offering civil disobedience and yet I offer it. Civil disobedience may not be the programme of the Congress, but it will be my programme.

Nariman—I want civil disobedience to be given up as the official programme of the Congress.

Bidhan—Nariman says that, in accordance with your statement, it will still be the official programme of the Congress.

G—Civil disobedience is the official programme of the Congress.

Nariman—Can you give us the formula you will place before the A I C C ?

G—My formula will be 'Having read Gandhi's statement carefully, and having heard his explanation, the A I C C endorses the advice given by him to restrict civil disobedience to himself, provided that when and if he has a proposal for the extension of the programme of civil disobedience, the A I C C reserves the right of accepting it or not. The A I C C asks all other Congressmen to follow his advice and suspend civil disobedience.' It will not be a blank card given to me. Every time I have something, I shall come to the Congress. You don't pledge yourselves as to the future. You reserve your right to accept my advice or to reject it. The Congress has a perfect right to offer civil disobedience. I say you should not do so just now. The Congress may not do so till the expert does not advise. All energy will thus be husbanded instead of being frittered away and wasted. The nation has got energy of which you have no conception but I have. I don't want to put an undue strain on the energy. Those who want to go to jail may retain the desire and prepare, and if and when I am ready, I shall

## NOT SUSPENSION, BUT RESTRICTION

come to the Congress, if I am alive Civil disobedience will be wholly unnecessary if the constructive programme is followed out The parliamentary programme will also form part of the Congress programme, supposing members of the Congress who go to the Parliaments are not going there for personal ends If a communal settlement is achieved, if untouchability is removed, if there is an India sober instead of an India drunk, and if we build up universal cottage industries in India, there will be no occasion for civil disobedience My civil disobedience will cover everything My civil disobedience will be enough even after Swaraj is achieved The only difficulty lies in convincing people that this way lies Swaraj Your parliamentary programme will be nugatory, if Hindu Muslim unity is not achieved You will be in a turmoil

Nariman—How will this decision contribute to the parliamentary programme?

G—It will contribute by releasing your energy I can't go into the councils I am a red rag to the bull My silence has contributed more than my words My words have lost their power I know I shall give a good account of myself when the time comes

Nariman—Is this dual programme not inconsistent—civil disobedience confined to one individual on the one hand, and parliamentary work on the other?

G—It is absolutely consistent The law-maker is no good, if he is not also a law-breaker

Nariman—I can understand the same individual doing the two things at different times But how can an organization do the two things at the same time?

G—Yes, it would be difficult, but not impossible If the Congress does not endorse my statement, you will be rendered impotent, you will be asked to give up position after position If you say, with your back to the wall 'Thus far and no further,' no Government can defy you

Bhulabhai—You can make a good law and break a bad one This distinction is unnecessarily verbal

## CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

Nariman—Are we to have a dual programme with two parts opposite to one another?

G—Are they really opposite?

Nariman—We shall have two sections—one making, and the other breaking, laws. Why should there be a hurry for council entry at this stage?

G—If I were in your place, as a lover of the country I would say 'We do believe in council entry' I tried to see if we could have such a strong mentality in the Congress that no one would think of the councils. But I see that we have a large body of men looking to the councils. I won't call it a weakness. It is a felt want in the country. I called it a weakness while I was still hoping about keeping out this mentality from the Congress. But I could not keep it out. Every time it erupts I understood the situation. I goaded Dr Bidhan. I said 'I advise you to form a party' I gave similar advice to Asaf Ali, Satyamurti and Abhyankar. I said to them 'In the councils you will be able to swear at the Government' 'But we were swearing at the Government,' they said, 'when we were in jail' 'But you can't go to jail,' I replied, 'because you don't believe in individual civil disobedience. When mass action comes, you will of course be there' I am for prosecuting the constructive programme. I am not a believer in the councils. But if I were, I would be the first member of the Swaraj Party.

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### NOTHING TO SAY NOW

[Date 3-5-1934 Place Ranchi A talk with a press correspondent]

Gandhiji—I have nothing to say now Public interest

demands that I should say nothing (A question was asked) It is too delicate for me to answer today I know when to speak and when not to speak That lady says I am free I shall immediately be in the picture when the Congress comes in

TRUE SWADESHI

[Date 17-6-1934 Place Bombay A talk with swadeshi workers During the last few months Gandhiji was approached by several workers in swadeshi for a comprehensive definition of swadeshi for their guidance In trying to prepare an exhaustive definition and in the course of discussion with co-workers in the extreme South, he discovered that such a definition was almost impossible, and that swadeshi was its own definition It was a spirit that was daily growing and undergoing variations Any attempt at a definition must fail and was likely to retard the evolution of the swadeshi spirit He, therefore, suggested the following workable formula for the guidance of the All India Swadeshi League and kindred organizations

"For the purpose of the All India Swadeshi League, swadeshi covers useful articles manufactured in India through small industries which are in need of popular education for their support and which will accept the guidance of the All India Swadeshi League in regulating prices and in the matter of the wages and welfare of labour under their control Swadeshi will, therefore, exclude articles manufactured through the large and organized industries which are in no need of the services of the All India Swadeshi League and which can or do command State aid "

This formula created consternation among the workers The result was a discussion between some members of the League and Gandhiji at Bombay during his visit in the course of the Harijan tour in June, 1934 The following is the gist of what Gandhiji said ]



Gandhiji—My formula, as stated clearly, is for the guidance of the Swadeshi League. It does not purport to cover the whole field of swadeshi. It is only by way of suggestion to the League to restrict the scope of its work to the encouragement and propagation of minor, particularly home, industries to the exclusion of major, organized ones. The object of making this suggestion is not to decry major industries or to ignore the benefit those industries have bestowed and in future may bestow on the country. But a body like the Swadeshi League need not become the self-appointed agents of those industries as it has hitherto been. They have ample resources at their command, and they are well able to take care of themselves. The spirit of swadeshi has been sufficiently generated, and it helps them without any effort of swadeshi organizations. These, if they are to be useful, have to concentrate their attention on struggling industries. Any attempt to advertise the wares of large, organized industries can only result in sending up prices. This will be unjust to the consumer. It is waste of effort to bring into being a philanthropic organization to help a successful business organization. We may not delude ourselves with the belief that our efforts have helped the growth and advancement of those industries. It will be a cheap self-satisfaction not substantiated by facts. I recall a conversation with Fazalbai in 1920 when I was on the eve of launching the movement of swadeshi. He characteristically said to me 'If you, Congressmen, become advertising agents of ours, you will do no good to the country except to put a premium on our wares and to raise the prices of our manufactures. His argument was sound. But he was nonplussed when I informed him that I was to encourage handspun and handwoven khadi which had been woefully neglected and which needed to be revived if the starving and unemployed millions were to be served.

But khadi is not the only such struggling industry. I therefore suggest to you to direct your attention and

effort to all the small-scale, minor, unorganized industries that are today in need of public support. They may be wiped out if no effort is made in their behalf. Some of these are being pushed back by large-scale industries which flood the markets with their manufactures. It is these that cry for your help.

Take the sugar industry. The largest major industry next to the textile is that of the manufacture of sugar. It stands in no need of our assistance. Sugar factories are fast multiplying. Popular agencies have done little to help the growth of this industry. It is indebted for its growth to favourable legislation. And today the industry is so prosperous and expanding that the production of jaggery is becoming a thing of the past. It is admittedly superior to refined sugar in nutritive value. It is this very valuable cottage industry that cries out for your help. This by itself furnishes large scope for research and substantial help. We have to investigate the ways and means of keeping it alive. This is but an illustration of what I mean.

I have no doubt in my mind that we add to the national wealth if we help the small-scale industries. I have no doubt also that true Swadeshi consists in encouraging and reviving these home industries. This alone can help the dumb millions. It also provides an outlet for the creative faculties and resourcefulness of the people. It can also usefully employ hundreds of youths in the country who are in need of employment. It may harness all the energy that at present runs to waste. I do not want any one of those who are engaged in more remunerative occupations to leave them and take to the minor industries. Just as I did with regard to the spinning wheel, I would ask only those who suffer from unemployment and penury to take to some of these industries and add a little to their slender resources.

It will thus be seen that the change in activity that I have suggested to you does in no way conflict with the interests of the major industries. I want to say this much

that you, national servants, will restrict your activities to the minor industries and let the major ones help themselves as they are doing today. The minor industries I conceive will not replace the major ones, but will supplement them. I aspire even to induce the owners of large industries to take interest in this work which is purely humanitarian. I am a well-wisher of the mill-owners too, and they will bear me out when I say that I have not failed to help them when I could.

### WITH SOCIALISTS

[Date 25-6-1934 Place Poona. A talk with two Socialists. The Congress Working Committee had passed a little earlier a resolution referring to 'loose talk'. This had perturbed Socialist circles. Gandhiji, therefore, began with an explanation about the resolution. A remarkable coincidence was that this talk took place immediately after Gandhiji's return from a meeting held at the Municipal Hall in Poona city, where an attempt was made to throw a bomb at him.]

Gandhiji—In the resolution there is no attack on the Socialist Party as the Socialist Party. I framed it for welcoming the group. Have you seen my letter to Masani? I have read your programme. There are two or three things in it incapable of being achieved without violence, i.e. without usui-pation. Never compromise on fundamental principles. I claim to be a Socialist because of my belief and conduct. In South Africa our people saw the beauty of what I propounded. There is victory without shedding blood. You should purge the document (i.e. your programme) of everything that is incompatible with your creed of non-violence. I say 'non-violence', because the word 'peaceful' in the Congress creed means 'non-violent'. If those who are at the helm

of affairs are not worth their salt, they must be swept off the board. Why don't you do as Jawaharlal did at the Karachi Congress? Your very wording shows that you can't achieve the thing without violence. Jawaharlal would have consulted me, he would have waited for my criticism, and not hailed this programme on the Congress and the country.

Q—No Socialist programme can stand without class war.

G—There need be no class war. Why do you wear the cap? The Working Committee has welcomed the Socialist Party. You can take it as a compliment. The Working Committee disapproves irresponsible speech. Instead of wearing the hat and saying that this is a direct attack on you, you could surely have said that this is simply a warning to those who indulge in irresponsible speech. It would not be worthy of the Working Committee if it made a flank attack. If Jawaharlal were out, your programme would not have been framed as you have framed it. He would have got it altered, or there would have been a division.

Write a letter to Jamnalalji and to me. I will give the answer. Say you have taken the resolution as a direct attack on the party. Can the Congress not condemn loose talk? You are unnecessarily tender. The Congress machinery cannot run if the Congress does not condemn the things that deserve to be condemned. You will find on record Congress resolutions condemning actions of Congressmen who have gone out of the creed of non-violence. I claim to have as much regard for Jawaharlal as any of you. In every step I take I think of him. I have before myself a picture of Jawaharlal and think of what he would say. Jawaharlal is my heir and successor so far as my hold on the Congress is concerned. I am discharging his stewardship. Then there is Sardar Vallabhbhai. I know some things that I have done will displease him. I wrote to him 'If you were out, I would convince you.' That is my life.

I may make mistakes and correct them

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# VIOLENCE v NON-VIOLENCE

[Date 10-7-1934 Place Karachi A talk with a co-worker]

Gandhiji tried to impress on the co-worker the need for non-violence in intention, word and deed, and said 'When you betray anger, it is violence'

About a certain case which was mentioned he said 'You did not intend to do him bodily harm, and he knew that you were not going to do him harm When crowds are being controlled, they know that nothing is going to be done, otherwise there would be ruptures every day'

Q—I saw that it was difficult to control crowds on the railway platforms in Bombay In such cases we have to use an angry tone This can't be called violence, isn't it?

G—You may even use a cane The crowds know that it is not meant to beat anyone Even the police have done that They have waved canes at the crowds In this tour they have co-operated, have become one with the people They have joined in the shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' and have paid money even surreptitiously

A reference was made by Gandhiji, in the course of the talk, to Miss Sonia Schlesin, his secretary in South Africa, and he said 'She was worth her weight in gold She was a brave woman No man or woman slaved more for me'

Q—A snake was seen the day before yesterday, and I killed it

G—It is violence But I don't want to condemn your action, as I did not condemn M—'s action He killed a snake in the Ashram He knew he was doing violence

But he had to save the lives of those who were under his care. He was not, however, killing the snake for the good of the snake. He could have said 'I should die rather than that the snake should die.' I would love to say that. I have said that the only merit I claim is that I don't deceive myself. I don't say I was free from violence. But I am trying to be. If I were free from violence, the history of the last fifteen years would have been written differently.

FASTING—INFALLIBLE REMEDY

[Date 11-7-1934 Place Karachi. A talk with local journalists. Gandhiji had just announced his decision to undertake a week's fast at the end of his Harijan tour, as a penance for the alleged maltreatment of the Sanatanist sannyasi Lalnath—referred to earlier in this book—at Ajmer on 11th July.]

Q—The reasons adduced by you for embarking on a new fast at the end of this tour are not convincing.

A—The movement is of tremendous importance. Nothing but a drastic measure like fasting can meet the situation. You can influence the mass mind not through speeches or writings but only by something which is well understood by the masses, i.e. suffering, and the best and the most acceptable method is that of fasting. My repeated experience here and in South Africa has been that when well applied, it has been the most infallible remedy. My lot has been cast with the masses, and I have always to take work from and through them. The only language they understand is the language of the heart, and fasting when utterly unselfish, is the language of the heart.

Q—Congress circles in Bombay view with alarm your decision to fast, and Congress friends are of opinion

that the strain would be too much

A—I have no such fears, and, physically speaking, a fast after an exhaustive tour can only benefit the person who has undertaken the tour

Q—But then there is the risk

A—Of course I am taking the risk I am not taking this fast for its physical effect Physically speaking there is some kind of risk, because my body does not require a fasting cure Any fast must require some risk, otherwise it has no meaning It must involve torture of the flesh. The decision is irrevocable I announced at the Ajmer meeting that I would undertake some sort of penance The announcement was long overdue I reasoned with myself and with my friends, and then came to the deliberate conclusion that fasting was the only penance that I should make Then the question was that of duration. I would have undertaken a longer fast But I do not want to produce any unnecessary shocks, and therefore I did not undertake the maximum period Friends who at the present moment are physically near me have realized the necessity of the fast

Q—Does it include also Kasturba?

A—Yes It has been my rare good fortune that in all such matters she has never worried me, never argued with me, and has allowed me to have my own way, although she has felt the distress Therefore, although she is my wife, I have not hesitated to say that she is one of the bravest women I have ever met in this respect

Q—What are your views on the Sind separation issue?

A—Now you are taking me out of my depths It is not to be answered before the 3rd of August

Q—But then you have been participating in political discussion!

A—Yes But it was not for public consumption I am glad that a reference has now been made to it, and that I have got an opportunity for expressing my sorrow at the breach of confidence indulged in by some young

journalists who were permitted to be present at the Congress workers' meeting at the Khalikdina Hall I told them that the proceedings ought not to be reported I consider that it is a breach of confidence to have reported unauthorized statements and I felt that those who broke that promise had not observed the fundamental etiquette of journalism, and it was a gross impropriety I have a fairly high notion of the journalistic profession

Q—Has not the Haijan movement estranged the community from national politics?

A—No, not in the slightest degree As is well known, I don't believe in watertight compartments Politics, religion, social reform, economic uplift, all these form parts of a whole

Q—There are critics who say that council entry is a concession to weariness, and that you have no faith in such a programme What do you say to this?

A—I have no such superiority complex It is not a concession to weakness It is a concession to hard facts That I have myself no faith in the council programme in terms of Swaraj is a different matter I should be sorry if those who have faith in council entry were by any act of mine prevented from acting according to their faith It was, therefore, a matter for pleasure to me to help those Congressmen who had faith in the council entry programme to follow out their policy

Q—What course would you adopt at the Banaras meeting of the Congress Working Committee with regard to the 'Communal Award'?

A—Pandit Malaviya, Bapuji Aney and others have felt aggrieved over the Working Committee's resolution I have seen nothing to alter my view But I would, consistently with my belief in the correctness of the Working Committee's resolution, go to any length to retain the valuable co-operation of Panditji and other friends The more I think of the Working Committee's resolution, the more I think that for the Congress it is the only correct attitude possible



## CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

Q—The bomb of the fast has been hurled on a country which is already apprehensive that, unless Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel are released, you may court jail again after 3rd August. The public wants an assurance that you will not go to jail again, as there is a lot of important national work to be attended to.

A—I honestly say that it is a matter not in my hands at all. I don't thereby mean to say that it is in the hands of the Government, though it would be true to a certain extent if I said so. However, at the present moment what I wish to say is that it is surely in the hands of God. I have no fixed notion of what I should do after the fast and the convalescence after it are over. You should believe me implicitly when I say that I should be guided by the inner voice.

Q—What are your impressions of the Harijan tour?

A—My impressions of the Harijan tour have been very happy. I should have been happier if I could have bagged more money.

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